



Republican Outcast

The Paul Stitt Story

**STITT REMANDED
UNTIL DECEMBER**

Paul Stitt



"Paul Stitt, was a well know republican, who had been sentenced to 22 years imprisonment for his political beliefs in 1994. After the signing of the Belfast Agreement, he was released in July 2000, he was then outcasted from his home September 2003. This is the story which led to that outcasting."

"the evidence of the other complainants is certainly flawed and has been undermined by their contradictions and falsehoods."

"the evidence shows that in the areas to which I have referred each of the three witnesses could be considered to be fundamentally unreliable,"

Crown Court Judge Tom Burgess

www.republicanoutcast.com

ISBN 978095533860-1



The Justice Press

£8.99

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978-0-9553386-0-1

First Published 2006 by The Justice Press
Ormeau Road, Belfast BT7 3HY
North of Ireland

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Printed in Great Britain by The Fast Print Network

*Dedicated to
My Dear Mum, Eileen,
Who sadly never lived to see the outcome
She had always hoped for.*

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ACKNOWLEDEMENTS

This book is an attempt to cover in general parts of my life from: just before going to gaol, court cases, gaol itself, freedom from gaol, life after gaol and up until the present day. I chose to write and publish this book quickly to try and dispel the awful rumours and stories that had been accepted as fact by many people. It has now been a few months from the end of the legal battle. Not many people realise that my case is over. This is due to the fact that the media have not reported it in-contrast to the publicity I received when I was first charged. This is My Way of telling My Story. However, it would not have been possible for me to write this book had I not received help, support and encouragement from many people. These included my Mother, my sister Linda, Fr John Friel, Fr Pat Duffy, Eileen and Danny. Mary Gilpin and Noel Quinn supported and encouraged me through the many difficult months living in the hostel and I received daily help from Avril, Nikki, Donna and the other staff. My solicitor Andrew Russell from Madden & Finucane showed great determination throughout and I obviously could not have done without the proactive help from my barristers Paddy Little and Andrew Moriarty. I would also like to thank Liam Ward for his decency and also Belinda, Ursula, Martine, Tanya, Angie, Cathy, JoJo and my father all for standing by me. It would not have been possible to carry on without all the constant messages of support from my old friends in Carrick Hill, Newlodge, Whitewell and Ardoyne. I'm also grateful for the help and support from some of my nephews and their girlfriends. I have tried to include as much detail as possible in this book. I have chosen not to name names but I have included lots of the legal facts and arguments to help dispel the fiction.

"It is not those who can inflict the most,
but those that can suffer the most who will conquer."

Hunger-striker
Terrence MacSwiney
Lord Mayor of Cork

If you have read this book and feel that an injustice was done to Paul Stitt, then voice your concern. Paul Stitt spent many years in prison for his part in the struggle and is calling on all his former republican colleagues to help him stand up to the thugs who have destroyed his life and reputation and help him return to the community he'd worked so hard for. All his adult life he had fought for Freedom Justice and Peace. End his injustice now, show your concern for him.

www.republicanoutcast.com

Correction of Rumours

I faced a massive media onslaught back in September 2003. I was accused of a multitude of sexual abuse against children that I was working with in the Carrick Hill and surrounding areas. It is true that I worked voluntarily in the community not receiving a single penny. I helped set up a Youth Centre and Football Teams and got a Minibus, organised and went on hundreds of outings; Football Matches, Football Training several times a week, Trips to Newcastle, Football Tournaments, Walt Disney on Ice, weekly outings to Lagan Valley Leisure Centre Lisburn, Indiana Land, Dundonald, Ice Skating at Dundonald, Lunar Land at York Gate, Cinema at York Gate and Glengormley, I got the use of: North Queen Street, Gray Gables community centres and Maysfield Leisure centre. I also had use of Ormeau, Cherryvale, Mallusk, and Falls' football pitches and in addition, the Water Works football Park. I worked with over 120 kids from the local area this was all done inside a two year period. I continued this right up until the day I learned of the accusations against me. And **contrary** to media reports and rumours I was **not charged** with a **single incident** concerning any of the youth I worked with. The charges (and false at that) against me were made by three adult males Mr A, B and C whom I had once considered my friends.

Tierna

You are my little daughter,
I love you very much.
I think about you night and day,
And just want to keep in touch.

If the sky should fall around me,
Or should I float off into sea.
Please promise that forever,
You'll always think of me.

Like an angel sent from heaven,
A gift from God to me.
You fill me full of happiness,
The way it's meant to be.

You know, an angel came before you,
But this was not to be.
Gods love for her was special,
Now she rest upon his knee.

In times of lonely sadness,
With or without me.
Remember what I told you,
You mean the world to me.

You are my little daughter,
I miss you very much.
I think about you all the time,
And will always keep in touch.

To my beautiful little princess.

I write this poem and book so that if something should
one day happen to me this memory will always be with
you. You will be able to read and understand as you grow
older. I have never loved anyone more in this world as I
have loved you. You have been my sole inspiration to
continue this long hard battle. I have loved spending time
with you from the beginning when you came in to this
world. I have never left you down.

Nor will I ever let you go.

Introduction

I endured seven years in gaol both in Crumlin Road Remand gaol and Long Kesh Camp through some very hard and frightening times. There was suffering of several beatings from riot control gaol staff in the first few years and in particular at Crumlin Road gaol the awful wait night after night expecting your door to be opened by loyalist on the wings and to be attacked in the form of a: stabbing, beating, scalding or to have an ear bitten off or worse. The gaol itself was a rotten building, full of dampness and freezing, cockroaches and vermin. Those were very hard and difficult times but almost nothing compared to the two and a half year nightmare that I have endured from the deliberate witch-hunt which began August/September 2003. That was when my whole world fell apart, many people thinking and believing I was a serial sex monster, "Et tu, Brute?" My life completely collapsed. I was heart-broken, devastated and a defeated person without the will to live. The majority of my friends and comrades had disowned me but thankfully some, even though very few, remained close and continue so.

Mr A, Mr B, and Mr C are the three complainants who made allegations against me. Mr X and Mr Y are two of my former friends both were republican prisoners at some stage in their lives and also

community representatives. However, we had several arguments with each other on political issues and in particular with Mr Y, community issues. As a result of those arguments we had fallen out and we had not spoken to each-other for some time. For the sake of clarity there is also a Mr J. He is a close friend of Mr B, one of the complainants. I have used Mr A, B and C etc as I don't want to use their proper names as it would be unfair as I am not allowing them to defend themselves in my book.

Prologue

The end? I packed some of my clothes and a few bits and pieces. It was around 5am on a mild September morning 2003. Having said my goodbyes and gave what appeared to be my final few hugs, not knowing what was in store for me, I walked out the door of my flat and glanced over my shoulder at the "angel" who had come to warn me to leave. They were now seeing me off and sadly for what appeared to be for the last time. The tears in the eyes of the Angel were abundant. I fought myself desperately trying to withstand emotional exposure. But full of tears and finding it hard to walk away from everyone and everything I loved, having worked so hard for a community most of my life, it was like walking into the abyss. I sadly made my way into the city centre with a small grip bag containing a few clothes and some family photos etc. I was headed for a city centre taxi firm when a car stopped beside me. It was a friend who had taken me by surprise. He said "hello, get in". He asked where I wanted dropped and I told him I was going to a close relative's house his reply was "no problem." We barely spoke along the way, but when he dropped me off he said "I'm real sorry to see you leave, and I wish you the very best of luck" he put his hand out and I did likewise we shook hands and again this felt as it would be for the last time. I called to the door of my relative's house. It took a few minutes for them to

answer as it was still early morning. They opened the door and greeted me with a sad smile. I would spend the next few days there while I was waiting to see what would happen with the malicious allegations. I waited until I had heard that these people had gone to the police. Some of my family were getting messages from an organization stating that I should go and admit to everything that was made against me or else I would face certain punishment although they didn't elaborate on this.

Chapter 1:

Republican History Belfast Crown Court

In the Crown Court In Northern Ireland Bill No 31/95

Committal Warrant

Whereas at the Crown Court sitting at Belfast...

On... Thursday 18th May 1995...

The defendant... Paul Stitt...

Having been convicted of crime...

The court ordered on the ... 18 day of May 1995...

That... he be imprisoned for twenty-two years...

The particulars of the conviction and sentence/order appear on the attached copy of the court record.

After our trial which happened some weeks earlier on Thursday the 18th May 1995 in Belfast Crown Court, myself along with two other comrades were found guilty of conspiracy to murder members of the security forces along with possession of two AKM assault rifles, one 7.65mm Auto Pistol hand gun and one Semtex coffee jar explosive

device. We were all also charged with hijacking, kidnapping and detaining a family against their will, even though we could not have been in two places at the same time. I was sentenced to almost one hundred years for all the offenses but had really to serve the terms concurrently and that meant serving a twenty-two year gaol sentence. My comrades Davy Adams and Robert Crawford were to serve twenty-four year gaol terms and Whitey Bradley and Paddy Donaghy were to serve shorter sentences of seven to ten years as they had played a far less serious role namely providing the hijacked van for myself, Adams and Crawford.

Throughout our trial which took place in January 2005, myself, Adams and Crawford pleaded not guilty but offered no defence. This was a common practice for republicans which in fact merely accepted that you had been caught red handed but as a final fight with the Brits, just prolonged the court case. It was a matter of principle and to waste money. However, Bradley and Donaghy had to fight the case against conspiracy to murder and the possession of the weapons etc. They did this and as a result were not convicted for those offenses. Rightly so, as they had no knowledge of what the van was being used for and were never handling the guns and explosives nor had they any knowledge of them. As the Lord Justice McDermott handed out his sentences in the court; the gallery was packed with families and friends belonging to the five of us and with traditional spirit and an unbroken will, the gallery applauded and shouted messages of support for the recently condemned men. It was a last act of public support basically as that was "it" for us and we were merely

just another few bits for the "conveyor belt system" which was in operation at that time and from long before. We were just the next few republicans to be arrested and imprisoned for our part in the struggle like so many before us and so many after us. In fact, the day after our arrest another three friends of mine from the New Lodge were arrested and put in the Crumlin Road with us. They too ended up getting huge gaol terms.

Chapter 2:

Conspiracy To Murder

Whereas the defendant appeared this day before a magistrates' court upon a complaint that:

Defendant, between a date unknown and 10 day of February 1994, in the County Court Division of Belfast or elsewhere within the jurisdiction of the Crown Court, conspired with other persons to murder Security Force Members, contrary to Article 9(1) of the Criminal Attempts and Conspiracy (NI) Order 1983.

That drama all began two years previously in Belfast in 1993 when the IRA's intelligence department had passed on to myself, Adams and Crawford the name of a high ranking police official; a chief superintendent Derrick Martindale. It was suspected that Martindale was responsible for running touts or more commonly known as informers or supper grasses in the Belfast area. He was also mainly in charge of the RUC's C13 the anti-racketeering unit, tasked with and responsible for closing down many of the IRA's money making

efforts which was having an impact on sustaining and effectively running its war machine. IRA operations of all types were costing a lot of money and the Brits knew this so they focused on the IRA's financial capabilities and ways of stopping them. Of course this was a good tactic employed by the Brits as no army can operate without money no matter how dedicated they are. So, of course taking out Martindale would have been a good target and could have had a massive impact on the rest of the RUC's C13 teams and in return enable the IRA to maintain and enhance its war machine. This was undoubtedly getting very expensive to run as the Brit's technology was becoming more and more advanced and mainstream forcing the IRA to adapt and use technology to counteract their technology and try to cut down on the loss of man power via its volunteers.

When the information was given to us by the senior leadership of the movement it was requested that we put a lot of time and resources into the operation but be extremely tight. At the same time it was a difficult task. It was almost impossible to be completely tight as the planning for this operation lasted several months, at least six anyhow. Having an operation on this scale unavoidably forced us into making contact with other departments within the IRA and thus opening the door to leakages and infiltration by the branch. As was the case with self-proclaimed informer alias Kevin Fulton. I met this person only once and not in the role of anything to do with the operation. It was through another volunteer, volunteer X the connection was made. Therefore myself, Davy Adams and Robert Crawford really had no say in the matter. Not that I suspected him of

being an informer but merely the fact that I only met him once I could have not and would have not used him for anything simply because I didn't know him. It was from volunteer X that his involvement was to become our disadvantage. Somewhere along the planning stages of the operation he was included, not directly, as he wouldn't have known what was going down, but would have suspected from experience that something was going down. He eventually supplied us with mobile phones that were bugged and tracked by his handlers and was to supply vehicles from down South for use in the operation. Myself, Adams and Crawford were meeting in safe houses all over Belfast while planning and preparing for the attack on Martindale. This included wearing disguises, surveillance techniques and dummy runs which also included me familiarizing myself with the route and travel area along with the home of Martindale. A lot of this was also done by a few other volunteers, fortunate not to be caught like us. It was towards the end of 1993 that the operation was to be carried out. A date had been set and everything had been arranged in terms of all the; mechanics and technicalities such as weapons, vehicles, communications, various modes of transport, for to and fro the scene of the attack. This was to be close to the house of Martindale while on his way to work in Belfast. However things unusually started to go wrong. The vehicles to be supplied never materialised, weapons were delayed and some of us realised that the police were perhaps on to us. The RUC approached several people including myself, connected to the operation and asked them to work for the branch. Volunteers noticed that they were being followed and as all this information was

put to the leadership the planned attack was called off or suspended. Myself, Adams and Crawford were told to lie low and try and put the cops off what we were planning. So, we did this and went about our own business for a couple of months and then in January 1994 when we thought it was all clear we met up again and discussed a new operation area in east Belfast namely Belmont Avenue West, only a few short yards from Strand Town RUC station. We thought this would be a good area and that it would send shivers up the backs of all RUC personnel and leave them wondering how this could have happened in what would have been known as a safe area for security force members, let alone taking Martindale out.

So following the delay, again we set up some safe houses in Belfast for us to meet in and proceed with urgency to carryout our attack. We arranged for weapons to be moved to an easily accessible area for collecting on short notice and for transport vehicles. However, coming closer to the time of the planned attack which was Thursday 10th February 1994, we developed some trouble again with the vehicles to be used. As this was so close to the date of the attack, only two to three days away, we had to adapt our plan and include the help of Bradley and Donaghy. This was in the field of locating a van in a safe area for the IRA to operate in and thus the New Lodge was chosen. They were asked on the night before to commandeer a van, unknown to them what was actually happening, even if anything was happening at all, as this was a common practice to hijack vehicles and abandon them anywhere just to throw the Brits and cops of guard for several different reasons which all made sense back then. Wednesday

morning the 9th February was the last time myself, Adams and Crawford had met up until we arrived at the safe house which was rented in East Belfast. Everything was arranged, the weapons had been sorted, the transport, mobile communication between volunteers and the plan shot into action. In a wee quiet street about ¾ mile away from Belmont Avenue West, the scene of the planned attack, Davy Adams made his way to a small terrace house. It was an end terrace or second from the end, I really can't remember now. I believe he arrived sometime between 9pm and 11pm on Wednesday night. He made himself comfortable but tried to be discreet not wanting to arouse the suspicion of the neighbours. Secondly, Robert Crawford made his way to the same house, again the same night but between 10pm and 12am, weary and not wanting to arouse suspicion with the residents of the terrace. Along with Robert came the weapons he had managed to bring over from a certain safe house in Belfast. He had brought these in the form of a grip bag, one which a workman would use and which was totally normal from our point of view having done surveillance of the area for months beforehand. This left Davy and Robert at Point A of the attack, getting near the operation scene safely and securely.

This then only left me. I was still in North Belfast in a safe house waiting on a van that Bradley was to bring to me. This eventually came about 1245am. While he knew nothing about the operation at all he could tell that I was a bit white on it and asked me was everything OK. I told him it was and that I needed the van for a few hours and that he was to hold the owners of the van hostage until I

rang him back in several hours. This was to stop the family reporting the van taking to the police and thus alerting a wide spread hunt by the security forces, suspecting a bomb or something was heading for the city centre which was common in those days. I told Bradley to hold the family until 07.15am Thursday 10th February and that if I had not phoned him by that time he and Donaghy were to quickly leave the house without delay no matter what. So, I shook hands with him and said "see you later" and he said "good luck." I left in the van and he headed back to meet Donaghy to stay in the house until 7.15am. That was just me then to get to Point A, near the area of operation, safely. As I started to drive away I noticed that the back of the van was full of builder's tools and rubbish. This was a problem for me as I had to make a stop on route and collect a bicycle. I quickly thought of driving over to Carrick Hill to dump the rubbish as quickly as possible. But it was now approaching 01.15am in the morning and I had to be very quiet as I didn't want people in the community being startled and woken from their sleep and perhaps even phoning the police about suspicious activity going on. I managed to get it all dumped quietly and was able to pick up the bike and place it in the back of the van. I was now ready to proceed to Point A. As I was driving down Donegal Street I noticed that Brits had an army check point on the road going down. I couldn't turn of and I couldn't stop and run as this would have jeopardised everything. So I decided to get the mobile phone out and have the number ready for contacting Bradley. As I approached the checkpoint I had the phone ready to ring to tell him that he was to get out of the house immediately. However,

to my surprise the Brits just waved me on and therefore I didn't need to ring him. That didn't stop my heart from beating like hell or wondering why they didn't stop me at the check point. I then just thought I was being paranoid. Then as I drove on down the street the army jeep started following me. Now I was really panicking. I was thinking, was it just coincidence or was it really following me. It drove behind me so I drove along as normal but turned at Donegal / York Street and it turned behind me. I continued proceeding on to the right down towards the Albert clock, and it did the same. I then followed the road all the way around past the clock and turned onto the bridge and to my relief it finally went straight towards the Markets. This didn't ease my apprehension at all. It left me very nervous and I was fighting with myself to either go on to Point A or abandon the operation. I didn't want to abandon the attack incase anything was to happen and people may have thought I was responsible. Having decided to go ahead, I made my way to East Belfast and parked the van at a street that we had previously discussed, again about half a mile from the rented safe house where Adams and Crawford were already at. I parked, got out, locked the doors and made my way around to the safe house.

That was now all of us at Point A. After I arrived, which was around 2am, Davy and Robert were wondering what the hell had kept me as they had expected me sometime earlier. So I ran-through the whole story of what happened and we discussed whether it was just coincidence or something more. I could now feel the apprehension and unease in the air. It was noticeable that we were all nervous and

not one-hundred percent with ourselves. We then discussed the operation which was to happen in a few hours by just going over the details several more times. This was more to put ourselves at ease and fill our stomachs with confidence again.

Davy Adams and Robert Crawford were both much older than I was at the time. They had served previous long-term gaol sentences and both of them were very decent human beings. Davy was more or less the senior figure of the three. He had a very well mannered personality, was very handsome and found it hard to keep women away. He was a true likeness of Barry Gibbs from the singing brothers the Bee Gees. He always treated everyone with total respect and loved a good joke more than anyone I knew. He was extremely politically aware of the conflict in the North and all its complexities, his ability to discuss many social and economic issues impressed me wholeheartedly. He was a very understanding figure and would always let the other person talk and never ever put anyone down, especially younger volunteers. He had a vast knowledge of international conflicts and their complexities. I couldn't have been made to feel more equal with him than any other person I have met in my whole life. Robert Crawford was also very decent. He too loved a good laugh and he too would never put anyone down, always up for a good debate about any subject. We would later go on to have many a debate in the gaol and later manned the interface areas together helping to stop riots etc.

It was now around 4am in the morning and we decided to take the weapons out of the bag again and make sure they were all in

working order. We did this and we checked that the AKM's were working well and proceeded to load them. We then checked the handgun and loaded it and then we took the coffee jar bomb out making sure all the parts, including the Semtex were there. We checked these several times to make sure everything was OK and nothing was left to chance. We then put them back into the bag again. Our attack was planned for around 6.50am to 7am. By the time we checked the weapons it was after 5am so I decided to lie down on the floor and try and catch a bit of a nap. As I was lying down on the floor I was thinking of the person that we were going to kill. I am a Christian and it was playing on my mind; I was praying to God and was asking him to understand. But being a Christian I knew God disagreed with any killing. Nevertheless, I prayed to God for over an hour. I also had butterflies in my stomach and I was praying to God that if anything happened to me would he accept me into heaven. Somehow I was asking for forgiveness for something I was about to do. I thank and pray to God now that it never happened. Not that I was happy that I was caught and went to gaol but now with hindsight, the political process and the cease-fires which followed our arrest and imprisonment it meant only that that attack for me would have been a tragic waste of life so close to the IRA cease-fire being announced. I can only speak for myself and thank God.

The time was now 6.15am and we were all up on the living room floor and looking out the window occasionally. It was time to shake hands and be on our way to Point B, the actual area of the operation, which was to be at the junction of Belmont Ave and

Belmont Ave West. It was our plan that I leave the house first as the van was parked a fair bit away and it would take me fifteen minutes walking casually to go pick it up. Then it was Roberts turn to leave with the weapons fifteen minutes after me and for him to walk to a prearranged point so that I could pick him up in the van. So I started to walk to collect the van. As I was walking along the street I noticed that a man was walking behind me. I slowed down and stopped and tied my shoe laces to let him walk past. He then passed me and I got back up again and continued walking. As this happened the man looked behind himself two or three times and looked at me. I automatically felt we had been watched all along. I slowed down again and let him get to the corner of the street to see which way he would go. He took a left turn the same way I was going to turn. So I went right and took a different street from originally intended. I walked back on to the main street which I had wanted to take at first. I heard a noise like a chopper in the air but I couldn't see one. This noise continued for a while. As we were close to the city airport I thought it might have been a commercial chopper and not a Brit one. As I was walking along the main street I proceeded to cross over to the other side of the road. I noticed another man standing at the corner of the street of which the van had been parked. Again I panicked. As I was getting closer to the street the man walked off and went up the street where the van was parked. Again I stopped, tied my shoe laces and gave the man what I thought was several minutes to be out of the street he had gone up. As I got to the corner of the street the man was roughly two-feet at the side of the driver's door. He looked at me and

walked off up an alley way. I said "fuck it" and just went over to the van put the key in the door but it wouldn't work. I thought to myself "what the hell?" So I went around to the passenger side and got in that way. The van started no problem so I made my way to collect Robert at our arranged point. I then picked Robert up in the van. He had the weapons in the bag. I told him what I had experienced and he said that he believed that he too was followed a part of the way. I asked him was Davy on his way to the attack area and he said "yes."

So we drove off again and went towards the attack area. But on the way I took a wrong turn and we had to do a detour. As we were making our way back via a different route we noticed a transit van parked that seemed to be swaying a bit as if it was full of people in the back. We passed it and saw that two men were in the front but couldn't tell who they were. As I passed I could still see the van swaying in my side mirror. I said to Robert "I think that was cops" he said "I know, me too." He said "fuck it, just go to the area of attack." We did that and parked up at Belmont Ave West, got out and got the weapons out. It was chosen because it had an alley way right at the junction of the street which was an ideal place to hide and was part of the route Martindale had been taking. As we got ready to carryout the attack we were still waiting on Davy coming. He was making his own way by walking to the area. I got back into the van. While waiting on Davy another man walked past us and looked right into the van at me. Robert was coming out of the alleyway over to the van and he too noticed the man looking in at the van as he walked past. I said "what do you think?" he said "I don't know" I said "I think we're fucked" he

agreed and replied "wait till Davy comes." To this day I can't remember talking or seeing Davy come before the cops hit us. I got a phone call from a volunteer saying that the "target has left and is on his way and should be with you in 5 minutes" I said "OK." I told Robert and he said "right" I don't know if Davy was in the alleyway or not. I think he was but just can't remember. The plan was to ram Martindale's car, hit it with a coffee jar, riddle it with the AKM's and then finish him off with the handgun to make sure he was dead. It would have been an overkill but it was one that we thought was necessary at that time for the reasons that I said earlier. And all only yards away from the police station. However, as I sat in preparation glancing out the window screen the transit van which we had spotted and passed earlier, had suddenly stopped in front of me. As I was sitting in the driver's side I quickly tried to open the door but at the same moment I felt a great thump to the head as the side window came smashing around me. I was dragged partially out the side window then the door opened and I fell to the floor. All I can remember is seeing boots kicking the shit clean out of me and rifle butts slamming in to me. Screams of abuse could be heard from every quarter. I was in agony. It felt like the beating went on for hours. I was screaming and I could hear the screams of agony from others. My hands and feet were then tied with plastic ties. I was dragged over to the other side of the street. I was then pulled up on to my knees and a couple of the cops were taking runs and booting me. They were calling us all kinds of things like; IRA terrorists, murdering bastards, scum-bags, fenian bastards, everything imaginable.... As I was pulled

from the van the handgun fell from my waist. When I thought they were finished beating me they found the gun and dragged me over to the van again. They said "shoot the bastard with his own gun." They then started to drag me towards the alley again as some of them were screaming "shoot him, shoot him" others were still booting me. I could still hear screams of agony coming from up the alleyway. They surely had Davy or Robert up there or both of them. I was then taken to Castlereagh Interrogation Centre and there, two of the cops that interrogated me beat the shit out of me while two of them didn't. It was similar to good cops, bad cops. I tried to give an explanation of only being a furniture removal man out on a job but I don't think they believed me.

It wasn't until the 12th February in court that I saw Robert, Paddy, Whitey and another guy called Jim who I'd never seen before that day and was wondering why he was charged with us. He subsequently had his charges dropped. The only person missing from court was Davy. I asked Robert where he was and he said "in the hospital." I later found that he had been severely tortured by the cops having his leg broke, his lung punctured, nose broke and multiple cuts and bruises. "and I thought I had it bad." It was some years later while we were in gaol that we all received compensation, with Davy getting thirty thousand pounds and me and Robert getting fifteen thousand between us. However I had half of mine taken of me for compensation that had been paid out to two cops several years earlier. As we walked out of the court-dock and down to the cells on the 12th February 1994 to massive cheers and applause from everyone in the gallery it was

certainly a relief that we had not been killed by the cops. Something I think they were itching to do but were unable to get authorization for from their bosses. Thank God, but I think they got their anger vented from the beatings and the subsequent gaol terms we got. I felt totally sorry for Davy and Robert as this was their second and third time in and it would have meant that they would be spending in total to date more than half their whole life in gaol. This was what republicans were to expect but nevertheless the sorrow was still felt by me. And it was still a shock being truthful, it is a commitment each person makes themselves, at no time is anyone ever forced to do something. I and others made the choice and I can live with that. Others try to blame everyone else for going to gaol but in reality it's down to one person and that's me or whoever else chose the same path.

Chapter 3:

Remand Crumlin Road

We all except Davy spent the next few days in the Crum annex before being moved to A wing and B wing in the main gaol which housed republican and loyalist prisoners only. The gaol forced the republican and loyalist prisoners to share landings and wings to make sure that no one group would have power in the gaol. This was done by putting republican p.o.w.'s in cells next to loyalist prisoners. This was a very dangerous and futile exercise by the Brits as republicans maintained an organised and structured command which was very disciplined and the loyalist had their UFF / UVF factions also. Basically, both republicans and loyalists were locked up in their cells for 23 hours a day with only being allowed in the canteen for one hour each day.

To try and break this Brit policy it was common practice for republicans and loyalists to attack each other by scalding one another, biting ears off, stabbings, beatings, hand to hand fighting etc,. Actually not long before I went to the Crumlin Road gaol the IRA had smuggled Semtex in and blew two loyalists up, killing one and seriously injuring others. In a reprisal attack for that, the UFF fired a RPG rocket at the gaol canteen while it was full of republicans but

none were seriously hurt. Even with all this going on the Brit policy was to force integration upon both traditions. So time in the Crum was not pleasant and it was a constant daily and nightly battle to stay safe from being attacked. What would normally happen was that usually 4 loyalists would assault a gaol staff, take his keys and open a cell door belonging to a republican and assault him in some way and the same would happen with republicans attacking loyalists.

The system went on this way until a well known UVF loyalist called Frankie Currie came into the gaol. Immediately he started a campaign to intimidate the gaol staff and to wreck the gaol physically in order to have segregation from republicans. His first big attempt was to get onto the roof of the gaol and hold a roof top protest. He did this with around one hundred other loyalist prisoners. This was given plenty of media attention and the RUC riot squad came in but a mediated agreement to bring the prisoners of the roof prevailed. Frankie Currie then took it that there would be some sort of change in the Brit policy. It was peaceful for a month or so when in the summer of 1994, Currie and the rest of the loyalist prisoners waited until all prisoners were locked up and most of the gaol staff had gone home for the night when they surprisingly started hammering the walls ceilings and floors of their own cells. They did this with metal bed ends and scaffolding bars that they had been able to get in somehow. This banging went on for most of the night. I was in a cell by myself and on each side of me there were two loyalists in each cell. They started hammering on both-sides of my cell walls. Initially I thought it was

just harassment but after communicating through windows and doors with other republicans I learned that it was much more.

The loyalist plan was to wreck the whole gaol so the authorities would be forced to move us to the Kesh where prisoners from both traditions had their own blocks. Throughout the night republicans had to be evacuated from their cells by a limited number of gaol staff and forced to sleep on the floor of the canteens. By the next day the loyalists had gone through almost every cell; the walls, floors and ceilings. They had managed to wreck the whole of A block and B block which housed both traditions.

This now changed Brit policy. For the first time loyalists took the lead and forced their own government to concede. We slept in the canteens on the floors for three days and nights until the Brits decided to move republican and loyalist prisoners to Long Kesh camp where they were each given their own block. For me, this was a huge relief. I could now sleep in bed at night not having to worry about my cell door being busted open and being attacked or worse. I know this was a huge relief for many other republicans too as we talked with one another and shared our thoughts and feelings at that time. Some of us had known each other outside and some we met for the first time inside but we were all comrades and helped each other out whenever it was needed; to talk or just listen to someone who needed to talk. There was always someone ready and willing to listen.

Chapter 4:

Long Kesh

Having arrived in the Kesh it was almost unreal the attitude of the gaol staff. The atmosphere in the gaol was generally somewhat different to that of the Crum. This was testament to the legacy of the hunger-strikers, the blanket men and all those republican prisoners that had gone before me. They achieved their five demands so that prisoners like me and those that would come after would be treated with dignity respect and unofficially as p.o.w.'s by the Brits for it was a gaol like no other. In ways, it was hard to imagine how those who died on hunger-strike and the blanket-men endured conditions of disgust and brutality for so many years. I wish to thank them all so much for making life as easy as could be for the people like myself who followed behind, notwithstanding the fact of being in gaol.

In the Kesh, republicans and loyalists had an understanding of each other. There was an acceptance that when leaving your own block while going on a weekly visit (if it occurred) that republicans and loyalists would bypass each other in a civil manner and therefore create an easy calm environment for that of the visitor's sake. This had been practice until all the remand prisoners came down from the Crum. One day while Sean Kelly from Ardoyne was going on a visit he was attacked and beaten by several loyalist prisoners newly arrived

from the Crum. This started the whole thing off again. In 1994 visit rooms were shared by loyalist and republican prisoners and their families. It was again a common occurrence for fights to break out in the visiting rooms and also on the way to those rooms. Mediation and agreements seemed to constantly break down and for around a year or so rows broke out until the gaol administration completely separated visiting rooms for both sides. This put an end to that type of fighting.

In March 1997 the IRA had failed in a mass breakout attempt as a tunnel which republican p.o.w.'s had been digging collapsed after digging an amazing ninety feet which was just short of the main wall. This collapsed due to the fact that the month of February saw the most rain fall in over two hundred years. This was a complete moral boost for republicans both inside and out and lifted our spirits sky high even though it was not a success.

We then had the killing of notorious loyalist murderer Billy Wright in December 1997 by INLA prisoners who were housed in the same block as each other; although the LVF prisoners were on one side of the block and INLA prisoners on the other. This caused massive unease in the gaol at the time as it was unclear how loyalists would react but no reprisals took place in gaol. Instead loyalists murdered and injured at least two dozen innocent Catholics over the next few months on the outside.

At a Christmas party in the gaol gym organised for the republican p.o.w.'s to have their family and friends celebrate the festivities, an extraordinary event happened. Liam Arnie Avril, republican p.o.w. managed to escape from the gaol which was said to

be the most secure in Europe. This was a complete success for the IRA in the gaol and for all their supporters outside. The gaol administration was totally shocked at the event and was not even aware of the successful escape until the IRA o/c had the pleasure of informing them.

Again, in March 1998 LVF prisoners murdered one of their own prisoners, David Keys. Keys was being held on remand in the gaol charged with two murders. It is understood he died a horrific death. Loyalists had also burned one of the blocks down and had taken to the roof many times for various reasons of their own.

Gaol Friendship

My period in Crumlin road gaol only lasted around six months. Then we were all transferred to the Kesh. This was due to loyalists destroying the gaol. Going to the Crum was a horrible experience I would say for all prisoners. The gaol was just too old and lacked the facilities to house such the type of prisoners as we were, political in nature. It was never going to be accepted by republican or loyalist that we would be classed as convicts and that was that. This in turn bonded all republican prisoners together and united us as one entity when dealing with whatever threat we faced either from loyalist or gaol riot squads or in fact the gaol staff. The gaol staff knew this and therefore recognised the republican structure albeit unofficially. Whilst being in gaol was sometimes an absolute nightmare it was also a place where personal friendships started or old ones cemented.

I had many friends in the Crum and the Kesh, some very close indeed: John Pierce, big Al Hughes, Sean mongoose Boyle, Mickey Campbell, Danny Lavery, Davy Adams, Robert Crawford, Dee Delaney, Brian Arthur's, Peter Lynch, Harry Maguire, Flash McVeigh, Tommy Fox, Sean Kelly, Pat Sheehan, Sid Walsh, Paddy Donaghy, Whitey Bradley, Sean Squiggs McGuigan, Sean Faye and lots more. We made the very best of a bad situation. We had some very funny times and got on like school children playing pranks on one another and also on the gaol staff. There were some very sad times as well as occasionally a relative of one of the guys in gaol would have died. This would have been when your time in gaol hit you up the face and all you could do was to offer that person your heartfelt support.

Contrary to what people's perceived views of what republicans were; at the end of the day we were only people, ordinary human beings who found ourselves in unfortunate circumstances. Many of those republicans had hearts of gold and would have done anything for another comrade. I recall vividly two very close friends; the first was Davy Adams my friend and also my co-accused. I had been doing a bit of handcrafting in the cell when I heard Davy's voice calling me out on the landing. I opened the door and looked out. Davy was standing a few doors down and I noticed he didn't look right, he said "are you coming for a walk" I replied "certainly." As we made our way out to the yards to walk around I said to him "what's wrong Davy?" he said "Paul, Eilish is dead." Well, my jaw dropped. I was absolutely lost for words. Eilish was Davy's younger sister and he was

very close to her and counted on her very much. He always talked about her and her family whom I also had known. Eilish's death was devastating to Davy. He was allowed two days compassionate parole by the gaol administration to grieve and attend the funeral. It's my personal belief that Davy was never the same person he had always been after that. I believe Eilish's death affected him so much and it was this tragedy that bonded us closer together. The other sad loss was for my friend Peter Lynch. His mother Peggy had died after a long illness and again what can one say to someone who had just lost their mum. You could only try your best and offer support whenever it was needed. Those were the emotional downsides to being in gaol even more so than the fact of being in gaol itself. In a way I was fortunate enough not to have suffered so much by such losses while in gaol.

There were other sad and emotional times but also they were happy times. Sad because friends you had spent months or years with, bonding friendships and almost being routine in nature. This was all the more so when time came for a person to be released having either served his time or had won in court. It was sad for you personally as the person would have been a very good friend but you would have been very happy that a republican was being released from gaol. Normally the routing was to give the guy a wonderful send off and a happy memory. Usually the night before his release he would be kidnapped and held until a nice cold bath was ready for him or eggs and flour or just whatever you could get your hands on. There was also a big party with all sorts of sweets and lemonade to celebrate the release. And on the morning of his release everyone in the block

would gather at the gates of the block and give him a fitting send off by applauding, screaming, shouting, banging etc. While shaking hands many such fortunate people found it too much to bear and often broke into tears, no matter how hard they tried not to. But truthfully this brought it back to many, including myself, a dose of reality, knowing that we were facing extremely long years in gaol. This was until 1998 when the Good Friday agreement was signed and over the next few years all republican p.o.w.'s in the Kesh were released under an unofficial amnesty.

Again, thanks to the ultimate sacrifice of the hunger-strikers and the protest by the blanket men we were able to spend the time in gaol relatively easy. Over the years I was in gaol, the gaol staff gradually pulled out of the wings in the blocks and twenty-four hour open access was granted to us. This meant that now we had our cell doors open twenty-four hours a day and the freedom to do as we pleased in our own blocks. It was this policy by the Brits that really left the republican leadership in the gaol to more or less run the gaol and have a complete and fully structured command. This was not supported by one hundred percent of the prisoners. My co-accused and friend at the time, Whitey Bradley was one p.o.w. who was constantly challenging every decision made by the republican leadership in the gaol. Throughout his three years he spent in the Kesh he would never agree with a decision even if he in his own mind agreed with it. This went on for ages and he started to alienate himself from friends. I was almost always in agreement with the leadership and was often playing roles in the gaol like the wing o/c (Officer in

Command) and the block o/c and various other roles. It came to the stage when Whitey started calling the republican leadership "collaborators" with the gaol administration. His point was that the IRA Kesh leadership were no better than the Brit administration, and that basically Padraic Wilson o/c of the republican prisoners was running the gaol on behalf of the Brits. He used the analogy from the film; Bridge On The River Kwai. That was a story about a group of British p.o.w.'s during the second world war that were held captive by the Japanese and forced to build a bridge over the Kwai to enable the Japanese to move their troops and supplies towards enemy lines. It was a strategic bridge and one the British and Americans wanted destroyed and one the Japanese wanted built. At the beginning, the British p.o.w.'s were tortured and forced to build the bridge. They reluctantly did so but also tried to sabotage it so it couldn't be used against their country men. Then it changes to the point where the Major in charge of the p.o.w.'s in the camp decided to instruct his men to build a bridge that they would be proud of and one that the Japanese would be jealous of until one day he realised what he had done and that he was wrong and was aiding the Japanese in their efforts to beat the Brits and Americans. Whitey made that same analogy saying that Padraic and the rest of the camp staff had been running the gaol for the Brits even better than the Brits could run it themselves. It so happened that Padraic got to hear of these stories Whitey was telling people and one day while Whitey was making a cup of tea in the canteen Padraic came in. There were a number of other p.o.w.'s in the canteen and Padraic wittingly said to one of them "did you ever see

that film, Bridge on the River Kwai?" to which the other person replied "yes." This was Padraic's way of letting Whitey know what he had been saying. So, Whitey put the head down and peacefully walked up to his cell.

In March 1997 a massive tunnel the republican p.o.w.'s were secretly digging had collapsed due to very soft ground and terrible rain the previous month. This was to be another huge embarrassment for the Brit administration and received world wide publicity. In reality as Whitey was going around the gaol preaching dissent and claiming how he could win the war and how the camp leadership had sold out, Padraic had a secret plan to help up to one hundred republican p.o.w.'s escape from gaol. While I knew nothing of the tunnel plan as I was in a different block, it was our block that the Brit admin sent the riot squads into as a punishment for humiliating them. Several dozen p.o.w.'s including myself were attacked and some very seriously; I was to be compensated for this some years later. Some days after the tunnel event I had seen Whitey and said to him "well what did you have to say to that?" he just laughed shrugged his shoulders and said nothing. Ever since then our friendship deteriorated and we had less and less contact with each other. He was now considered to be a Walter Mitty type character by most of the republican p.o.w.'s. In fact Walter was the name everyone referred to him as a talking point "I saw Walter down at the visits to day" etc. He would from then on constantly spend a lot of time in the gaol hospital; perhaps so embarrassed and reluctant to bump into Padraic. It was coming close to the end of our time which was July 2000. The

last year or so in the Kesh had to be one of the best. The number of men was probably at its lowest from the start of the conflict. This made the fewer numbers closer to each other and we had some really terrific times. We often made our own entertainment; Dee Delaney from Ardoyne was our music master. He loved playing the tin whistle and the Borhan. Each night he would give us a few tunes and a wee sing-along-song. Tommy Fox from Andytown was also a tin whistle player and he, Dee and the rest of us would get together and have a real good laugh. Sean Kelly and Berty Duffy would also join in.

Chapter 5:

Freedom 2000

It was in the summer of 2000 that I was released from Long Kesh gaol. I remember the day as if it was yesterday. My family, friends and neighbours from Carrick Hill braved the rain to welcome me home. I was one of the last p.o.w.'s from the remaining IRA prisoners left in the Kesh to be released. Several car loads of people had also made their way down to the gaol to celebrate my release at the gaol gates. Hundreds of people had made their way down to cheer and applaud the release of their friends and relatives who had been incarcerated in the Kesh. The gaol car park was full. It seemed more like a football stadium than a gaol that day. The atmosphere was electric it seemed like utopia. For a few hours it was hard to digest and comprehend that finally all republicans in the Kesh were free.

It seemed not so long ago that I had been sentenced to over twenty years and had only served around a third of that sentence. There were people from all over the North of Ireland getting out of gaol and a lot of them had become good friends of mine. We managed to shake hands and have one more yarn as we all went our separate ways. Some I would see on a daily or weekly basis and some I have not seen since that day. I left some good friends that day from all over the north. A few of the people that were released with me

have since died by serious illness or road traffic accidents. It is unreal the amount of time some of the people had spent in the Kesh. Some p.o.w.'s have served up to three to four terms. Some were blanket men and former hunger-strikers. I know I had found it difficult to spend my time in gaol at times; but I must applaud the sacrifice given by those who spent many terms locked up and at times in appalling conditions.

Having been released that day, I was driven to Carrick Hill and after the greetings in the street I was to give an interview to Jacqueline McIntyre from Irish News which they published the next day in their paper. My interview was totally supportive of the peace process and that the prisoners who were released the previous day were all part of the solution and not the problem part of the interview was as follows:

IN MAY 1995, Belfast republican Paul Stitt was sentenced to 22 years in prison. Yesterday, he walked free from Long Kesh, confident of his new role as "part of the solution" in Northern Ireland.

The north Belfast man was one of 78 prisoners released under the final phase of the Good Friday agreement.

Yesterday, family and friends braved the rain to decorate his Carrick Hill home with a massive tricolour and flags in honour of his homecoming.

Speaking just two hours after his release, the 29-year-old admitted it was hard to believe he was finally free.

"It's still a bit unreal. When I walked out this morning it felt

like I was just going out on a visit – but then, when I came back to the house and saw the flags and everything, it started to sink,” he said.

“It’s been a long wait and, to a certain extent, today was tinged with a bit of sadness because two of my friends were left inside. But it’s an important day and there’s a tremendous sense of relief to be out.”

In May 1995, Paul was jailed for 22 years for conspiracy to murder and possession of firearms.

Surrounded by well-wishers at his home yesterday, he said he believed former prisoners had a vital role to play in Northern Ireland’s future.

“We’re absolutely essential because we are political prisoners and, just as we were part of the conflict, now we are part of the solution,” he said.

He has vowed to join Sinn Fein outside the prison to help “further their objectives”.

Before the prisoners left jail yesterday, he also revealed that a meeting was held to air views on what should happen on its closure. The consensus was that, at the very least, the H-block in which Bobby Sands served time, and the prison hospital, should be preserved as a museum.

“We met and talked about it and we would particularly like to see H3 and the hospital retained,” he said.

“It could become a tourist attraction just the way Robin Island is in South Africa and Kilmainham in Dublin,” he said.

Looking ahead in the short term, he is preparing to enjoy the

next few days at home and, with a string of newly-acquired qualifications, he is interested in working with computers.

Above all, he is determined to work towards a positive solution to the situation in Northern Ireland.

“At the moment there are a lot of difficulties with the Patten report and all these issues need to be resolved,” he admitted.

“But I have total confidence in the Sinn Fein leadership that they will do everything in their power to ensure that the Good Friday Agreement is implemented.”

Republican prisoners were to be vital in the following years building up the struggle and more importantly working at the interfaces throughout Belfast. For without all the involvement of the p.o.w’s, life would have been one thousand times worse than it was for the interface communities.

Community work

After my release from gaol I immediately got involved in politics and community work. I had started to prepare for commemorating the 20th anniversary of the hunger-strikers who died in the gaol I was just released from. I helped out with the national hunger-strike photographic exhibition which we displayed in the Europa hotel in Belfast. I then set up a local commemoration group in the Carrick Hill area and we put on a series of events to mark the occasions throughout 2001.

Our biggest event was a special mass which was held in the Carrick Hill community centre and it was concelebrated by Fr John Murphy, Fr David White and Fr John Friel. Fr Murphy was one of the priests who was at the side of most of the hunger-strikers as their lives came to an end. He was one of the gaol chaplains at that time and continued to be the head chaplain throughout my time in gaol. Fr Friel was also a gaol chaplain who I had got to know well throughout my years in the Kesh. We had some good and energetic debates on most of his visits to the Kesh. Fr White was the local parish priest. He had come up to visit me and many others from the New Lodge from time to time to offer guidance and support to his parishioners. He would also later become more of a friend to myself as time passed by. We had also Pat Sheehan taking part in the Mass. Pat was one of the hunger-strikers who had been taken off the fast only hours or days from death. Pat would have been a real good friend of mine in gaol, very intelligent and politically astute. John Pierce also took part in the Mass. John would have been one of the younger p.o.w.'s at the time and was also a blanket man. John was from the New Lodge and was a great friend of mine both in gaol and outside. Carrick Hill, for all the size of it, showed great respect and commitment while marking the various events throughout the 20th anniversary. I would say it had some of the largest local gatherings in Belfast.

It was for this reason that I had also got involved with community projects in the area. I had abseiled down the Europa hotel in an effort to raise money for the Belfast St. Patrick's day festival; due the fact that the City Council, at least up until that time, had

refused funding for the massive event which had taken place annually in the city centre.

Not long after I got released from gaol many people from the area had asked me if I could help organise events for the local youth of the area. I did this as it was plain to see that the area needed some help. There was barely anything at all for the youth and as a result of this minor vandalism and anti social behavior was common practice. It was accepted that the community centre had neither the will, the funds nor the personnel to run steady projects for the youth of the area. Also many youth had been banned from using the little resources that it did provide. So I called on some of my friends and we set up a youth group. This was done officially and called St Patrick's Carrick Hill Youth Centre. We did not have a building. We were more a street organization working our way to getting a premise. We enlisted the help of the local parish priest Fr White, who was absolutely great. He was able to use his influence and connections in the Belfast Education and Library Board (BELB) and various other body's to gain help and support. We managed to get use of the Recky community centre in North Queen Street, Grey Gables Youth Centre in the New Lodge and the new Water Works football pitch on the Cavehill/Antrim Road. In addition to this we set two football teams up and put one in the Down and Connor youth football league. We had also raised money and got a minibus and were able to use this for running trips and football matches on at least two days a week. We did what the kids were interested in and that was: going swimming, football training, matches, Indiana Land, Lunar Land, ice skating, bowling, cinema etc.

It's my belief that over the eighteen months to two year period that I had volunteered that we had probably done more for the youth in terms of channeling energy, outings and trips etc, than the recently built, Carrick Hill community centre had done in the last few years, since it first opened its doors. I have kept all the records and the amount of people involved to prove that.

My commitment was to the people of Carrick Hill and surrounding areas. My only concern was ensuring those people had a good quality of life by trying to reduce the amount of vandalism that misguided youth had been causing around the area. I was trying to utilise and channel that misguided energy and get the youth involved in positive outlooks and events and let them steer themselves in a beneficial course of their choosing. I spent literally dozens of hours each week working to build up, in particular, the Carrick Hill area. I received absolutely no pay, nor did I want any. I wasn't ever able to buy a house or anything like that. And I certainly wasn't like one or two of those masquerading republicans in Carrick Hill who have sat for years and years and criticised people like myself. I will certainly say that other decent people in Carrick Hill worked hard for the community like Emanuel Conway, John McKinney, Arthur Anderson, Patricia Stitt and others. They too worked without complaining and as a result of lacking recreational facilities. All we wanted, was to help the community, not sit behind a desk getting a great wage for attending a meeting or two and giving the perception they were doing something, maybe walking about the area once or twice a year and pretending to be part of a community defense team when all they

were actually doing was acting for their own selfish interest. When the interface trouble really broke out these people were nowhere to be seen after the first night or two. Yes, I'm talking about those few people in Carrick Hill, in particular the same people who destroyed my life for their own selfish interest nothing more nothing less. These are the people mainly Mr X and Mr Y who used and manipulated several people into making allegations against me and for what? I leave it up to the good people of Carrick Hill and beyond to make their own mind up. They weren't looking justice for anyone. It's they who have caused an injustice. Mr X and Mr Y claim to have outcast a child abuser. They don't care about child abuse; because they freely facilitate the ability of drug dealers to operate with impunity and indeed it's now clear to see they have become best friends with these people. They had been responsible for intimidating and harassing people into making allegations against me. They are collaborating with the "biggest child abusers of all" selling drugs to children in Carrick Hill and other areas. They need to look in their own back yard before accusing anyone of anything.

Interface work

In the two years from the end of 2000 until almost the end of 2002, North Belfast saw some of the most dangerous and prolonged riots since those of the hunger-strikes. Indeed, Alan McQuillan Deputy Chief constable at the time in 2001 said some of the riots were the worse he had witnessed in over twenty years. Nationalist residents

in; Carrick Hill, North Queen Street, Duncairn Gardens, Limestone Road, Clanchatten Street, Newington Street, Glandore Area, Westland Area, Whitewell Area, Serpentine Road Area, Long Lands and Bawnmore, all those including others came under gun, pipe-bombs, petrol bombs, stabbings, murders, hatchet and baseball attacks in the middle of the day, in the middle of the night, at breakfast time and dinner time. Even during the snow on Christmas Eve/Day 2001 women and children were forced out of their homes in the Limestone Road area because of loyalist bomb attacks.

It was said at that time that both sides were responsible, however even according to PSNI statistics the majority of attacks were started and carried out by loyalists. Very few were started by nationalists because myself, Gerard Brophy, Gerry Kelly and the good residents of all the areas mentioned, helped man the interfaces along with the help of dozens of ex-republican prisoners from New Lodge and West Belfast. Week after week they also stayed to help those people isolated and seen as being in the most vulnerable areas. Those ex-republican prisoners were consistently giving up long nights each week for nearly two years. That was true commitment. Due to the fact that I was a well known republican and had been released from gaol not so long a go, I became the face of the republican community. I was helping to co-ordinate interface workers and to prevent riots from breaking out in all these areas from Carrick Hill to Whitewell.

Residents would have called on me if I had not already been there. I became close friends to many households all over these areas. In the Serpentine area whole streets were petrol bombed. In

Newington Avenue and Street, which backed onto loyalist Tigers Bay, people that were unfortunate in having to stay in their homes, ended up living either at the front or back of the houses, due to the frequency of the attacks on their homes. Blast bombs rained over the rooftops like scenes from Hollywood movies. Massive wire fences had to go up in most of the areas like North Queen Street, Newington and Whitewell in an effort to stop the bombs from hitting the houses. We ended up collecting fire extinguishers from sympathetic Bars and Clubs all over Belfast. This was so we could leave them in the homes of those most vulnerable to attack.

I remember watching the plane attacks on September 11th 2001, as was the whole world, when I was called to a mass riot in the Limestone Road as loyalists had just attacked the area with blast bombs and paint bombs. It's no secret we worked with the PSNI on the ground at the interfaces to try and calm the situation down on many occasions. One day myself and Gerard Brophy were on North Queen Street with a few other community workers that had been holding crowds of young nationalists back from running over to Tigers Bay after an attack by a loyalist band parade early that same day. We were further down the road close to the North Queen Street / Duncairn Road junction discussing how to break up the crowd when suddenly there was a loud bang. Later in the evening we found out that a sixteen year old protestant boy, Glen Branagh, attempted to throw a pipe bomb over the PSNI jeeps in our direction. It exploded in the air and he killed himself. This tragic death led to further rioting. As a result the PSNI stormed into North Queen Street, beating

residents in their own homes for no other reasons than sheer ignorance. This resulted in several people on the street being injured including myself and Gerard Brophy. Gerard was knocked out for a moment and had to be dragged away from being run over by a PSNI jeep. At times it seemed the PSNI were looking for trouble. Several times police jeeps drove straight at me in an attempt to aggravate the crowds and for the interface workers to lose control of the situations so that elements of the PSNI could start firing plastic bullets.

Throughout that short period of about eighteen months many people were hit with; plastic bullets, pipe bombs, hatchets, shotguns etc. Two young children in Newington were seriously hurt with blast bombs as they played in the street. Whole houses were burned down and whole streets were abandoned. It would not have been any different than living in Iraq. People don't realise how bad it was. Only the residents who lived in those areas and the people who tried to help them, really understood. The media ignored most of it and this in turn gave loyalists a free hand. I recall another incident when a so-called national TV news crew were filming the aftermath of a riot at North Queen Street when suddenly loyalists indiscriminately attacked the area with up to a dozen pipe bombs. The news crew quickly packed up and ran the hell away instead of listening to pleas from the residents to film what was happening and show it to the world. It's certainly fair to say that they won't get "crew of the year award" but then again, they just "might."

During that period of devastation for those people at the interface areas myself, Gerard Brophy and Gerry Kelly along with all

the interface workers tried to deal with these situations on a daily basis. Mediation networks were set up between both communities. In one particular incident a phone network was setup between residents of Limestone, New Lodge, nearby areas and those of the Tigers Bay area. This was to stop any would be drunks or riot seekers from starting anything at all. In the nationalist Limestone area a house was attacked in the early hours one morning with petrol bombs. Several hours later, text messages appeared from the mobile phones. These were supposed to stop the trouble from the loyalist side. The messages joked about the attacks they had carried out. This infuriated nationalist residents. They had no faith in the mobile phone system in the first place and this bore fruit over the following days.

Throughout that period while loyalists were supposed to be on ceasefire, they murdered several innocent people (Gavin Bret age eighteen Glengormley, Ciaran Cummings age nineteen Antrim, Gerard Lawlor 19 Antrim Road.) They also tried to kill several others by; shooting, stabbing and beatings on the Cliftonville Road and Limestone Road. At Newington Street Joe Murphy was beat and stabbed on the head and body five times. At North Queen Street, an interface worker was brutally mown down by a car driven by loyalists from Tigers Bay. Two young girls aged eight and eleven were hit with pipe bombs. Four young people from Carrick Hill and New Lodge narrowly escape death as they sat at a bus stop on the Antrim Road as loyalists opened fire on them from a passing car. Two young girls from North Queen Street were trapped and beat by loyalists in a health centre. A catholic taxi driver escaped death after two youths

fired shots at his car on the Shore Road. The Claradon Bar in Garmoyle Street came under fire by loyalists. In Clifton Park Avenue loyalist gunmen fired into crowd of residents and hit a woman in the leg. These examples were on top of hundreds of pipe bomb attacks, petrol bombings, shootings and assaults all over North Belfast. It was for this reason I spent every single hour available to me trying desperately to help and support those most vulnerable at the interfaces. I can say with certainty that a huge majority of those people showed enormous restraint under untold provocation. Only they know how much they endured over that period and only they know that it was people like me and others who spent night after night after night in the freezing cold of winter through to the long bright nights of summer standing ready and waiting to assist them whenever they needed help. It was even just a huge relief for them only to look out their windows at night and see the interface workers standing outside. This was enough for them to eventually go to sleep and to be able to sleep without fear of their homes being attacked. I know in my heart that they fully appreciated myself and the others as many nights these kind people fed us and came out and stood with us for yarns and a bit of craic.

Many nights I too shed a tear in the homes of those on receiving ends of blast or petrol bombs. Sometimes it was all just too much for me as it was for them. They knew my commitment to them was one million percent. It is these memories I know that the majority of people will remember me for and not these evil allegations made against me. They know I was there for them when it mattered most,

unlike those few armchair critics at Carrick Hill and elsewhere who refused time after time to take part in the real interface work. Not the pretend type of work running about with radios on the 11th and 12th nights. Knowing everyone would see them and then live off that for the next twelve months. While cashing their fat cheques every week in-between.

When the most vulnerable people needed them they failed miserably. Their only input was to criticise me and others for helping to stop riots and attacks on these houses. They say that we were helping the RUC/PSNI by stopping people rioting and attacking the PSNI. Well, everyone is entitled to their own opinion, but what I and others were doing was stopping some of the trigger happy PSNI men from shooting young children with plastic bullets by not affording them the opportunity. As, let's face it, most of the people rioting were under the age of sixteen. I certainly didn't want some mother or father having to be told that their child has been seriously injured or killed by a plastic bullet at a riot on the New Lodge, Carrick Hill, Limestone, Whitewell or elsewhere.

That's what it was all about! Looking after our own people and learning from the past. Certainly at times when one of our communities were under attack by mass crowds of loyalists; yes nationalists youths did come out in their hundreds and at times in thousands to defend their homes and that of their parents. After this many of the youths would return home again. But what we were doing was to make sure and to prevent to the best of our ability, young riot seeking nationalists from starting anything which could only end in

suffering for those most vulnerable. That's why the PSNI was able to say that the majority of attacks along interfaces were started by loyalists.

It was around the end of 2002 that an uneasy calm returned to lower North Belfast. It was at this time that I had taken a back seat from the interface work and was able to concentrate more on the youth and community work. I was physically and emotionally drained from being out on the streets 24/7 for such a long time. I was exhausted. A more structured approach had been built up over the previous twelve months which finally enabled me to step-back of the stage for awhile, knowing that we had created the interface network which included greater numbers of people which could reduce the number of hours or days that people manned the interfaces. I write this without fear of exaggeration and only those opposed to myself, the peace process and those anti republican/nationalist would say otherwise.

Chapter 6:

Allegations

Anyone in the world can make an allegation It is so simple. People choose to make accusations and allegations for a multitude of reasons that will really only be known to a few people. The person or persons making the allegation and those that are accused. Sex allegations are by far the easiest to make and extremely difficult to prove false.

If you are a rich person and someone makes an allegation against you, most of the time your friends will stand with you. Rich people tend to live in big houses in non "neighbourhood" settings. This enables them to carry on life as normal and live as if nothing has happened. They often have the support of the press e.g. footballers etc, and indeed the support of the public. This was seen clearly when a number of Northern Ireland players were arrested and imprisoned for a short time in Spain. They had the overwhelming support of the local press here while they remained in gaol. On top of that, the newspapers even stated that the women making the accusations were only claiming rape in attempt to gain cash settlements from the players. Whatever the circumstances the media treat people differently and it's clear to be seen that poor people like myself are almost tried and convicted by the media in public even before you have a chance to defend yourself in court. Another example was when the late

George Best was arrested on an indecent assault accusation of a thirteen year old girl. Once again the local press ignored this as he was seen as a local hero and not someone who would do such a thing. These are only a few examples. The other factors we have to take into consideration are that most of the media in the North are biased against republicans as they are merely pro-state newspapers. As I am a republican and always will be, the media choose more to highlight that fact rather than report that an actual person was accused of sexual crimes.

In contrast if you are poor and live in a community or small town then you are going to find it very difficult to stay in that community especially when the press get the hold of those allegations. Have no doubt they will crucify you Innocent or Guilty.

If you are well known in the community then this makes it one hundred times worse because all your enemies from the day you were born will jump on the bandwagon to fuel and exaggerate the rumours and accusations, thus creating an atmosphere of hate. What also happens is that your family and close friends suffer, sometimes severely because they are seen as supporting you, and don't believe all the rumours that lots of other people do. Again, this is due to the fact that you live in a community. That's how it works and it has always been that way.

My nightmare started with one person, Mr B who had been a friend of mine for ten years or more. He had fallen out with me because I relayed a message to him that it was suspected that he and another guy Mr J were heavily into selling drugs in and around the

local area. Indeed it was stated to me, that he was running a delivery service. He then told Mr J that they had been accused of drug dealing. Mr B came back to me and asked me if there was anything I could do. I told him that his only choice was that if it was true, to stop immediately and go and see some people, that I named to him, and admit what his involvement was. I explained to him that the people accusing him had told me they had factual evidence of his dealing. He then tried to explain to me that he had only been getting it for his friends and was not selling for profit. So I explained if that was the case he should go and admit it to them before it was too late. He never did this. He then approached me again and made it known to me that if I wouldn't help him he would make it known that I was "queer." I laughed at him and ignored that statement. Saying to myself "that means he would have to admit that he too was queer." I repeated to him his only way out was to go and admit what he was doing and we left it at that. Some weeks later his mate Mr J, who was also accused of drug dealing, went to see a community leader, Mr Y (whom I had fallen out with over community and political issues) and informed him of a story that I had sexually abused his friend Mr B for a period of years; and was there anything he could do about it. Mr Y, the community leader and ex-republican prisoner, went and informed Mr X of the matter. He too was another ex-republican prisoner and also a former friend of mine for many years. We had had disagreements on political issues and from then never spoke to each other. Over the next few weeks Mr X and Mr Y organised a campaign against me.

People will say that "there's no smoke without fire." They will ask why would a person say things like that if it weren't true. So therefore it must be true. Added to that if enough people say it then it undoubtedly must be true. If several more people come along and say "oh yeah, this happened to me also," then even for the most objectively thinking person it would be hard not to think that something has happened.

Mr B was the first person to make the accusations. He didn't make them public himself, he got his friend Mr J to make them to Mr Y (a friend of mine for over twenty years). Mr Y in turn of course informed Mr X (another friend for over twenty years). Both these two men were much older than I. They were seen as more senior in republican circles. But more importantly Mr B and his friend Mr J knew that I was not in speaking terms with my former friends Mr X and Mr Y. For some weeks X and Y ran around meeting and conspiring against me, convincing many more people that I was an evil monster and something should be done to me. This was exactly how it happened. Neither of them came near me once until the day I was outcasted, to ask was it true or false. They were so obviously glad for the chance to ruin my character and life that it didn't matter to them. For over twenty years I knew both these men and not one of them had the decency to come and ask me. Only six months beforehand, I had went to Mr Y, the community leader, and warned him that his nephew had stolen a car and crashed it into a garden wall at Carrick Hill and that he was also selling drugs. I advised that he should get the problem sorted out before other people got involved. I

used my influence from being an ex-republican prisoner to ensure nothing happened to his nephew. I did this as a show of respect for the community leader even though we both didn't see eye to eye with each other. My objective in the Carrick Hill community was to try and ensure that no young person became the victim of community justice. It was my firm belief that everyone deserved an alternative way to make good any bad deeds that they were involved in. It was also my strong belief that the only sure way of reducing ant-social behaviour, vandalism and petty crime etc, was to work with the kids involved on a daily basis. This was something which I was heavily involved in.

After Mr B made the accusation it wasn't long before another one and another one came along and joined the party. It soon became clear that it was now fashion to have been a poor victim of Paul Stitt. Everyone wanted in on the action. It was now a few weeks since the accusations were first made though still obviously unknown to me at the time.

I finally learned all this from a family member. At first I dismissed it as nonsense and foolishly thought that it would blow over in a few days or so. But I never factored into account that two former friends were organizing the whole thing. To my amazement it continued and for the worse at that. The rumors had gotten extremely bad and this started having a serious effect on me. Some friends kept in contact with me over that period whilst others came nowhere near me. I used this as a measurement of the hysteria in the area. I then saw the person that first made the allegation, Mr B, driving in his car. I followed him in my car to challenge his accusations directly. When

he noticed that I was trying to wave him over to talk, he took off speedily. The next day I was told by some community representatives not to go near him. I now realised that these rumours were out of control and worse still as lots of people were believing them. I had a small number of friends who still kept in touch and called round offering me support and discounting the rumours. I went to see a solicitor and his advice was to do nothing and ignore them unless the police get involved and in that case I was to get back to him. The rumours got so bad that even the PSNI called out to my house on three occasions to see if I had been beaten, shot or abducted. Their petty informers were obviously telling them these stories as that's what they believed given the strength of the rumours. As the days went on the strain was beginning to take its toll on me. I was exhausted from not sleeping and eating and had lost two stone. I was feeling sick but trying to act calm around my family and close friends. I was devastated. For the first time in my life I was a broken man. This guy had succeeded in defeating me. I went to see the local priest and ask for some advice. My emotions got the better of me and I could hardly talk as I was crying so much. My world was collapsing around me with friends deserting me and even worse, family members. I had one really strong friend who was totally much stronger than me. This Angel was my dear friend. Even under enormous pressure from their own family, angel remained my friend through thick and thin. That's a debt I can never pay back. One of my last days in Carrick Hill, I can't really remember which day now, having fobbed off my family and friends for too long I told them that some of what was being said

was true. What I meant by this, was that I had been gay or bi-sexual or whatever the hell you want to call it. I did have some sexual relationships with the same sex but how and what was being said out on the street was not at all true.

It was after this admission that I hit the lowest of the low and just couldn't think straight. One morning I thought of a way to commit suicide and tried to carry it out. I went to the psychiatric department in the Mater hospital and got medicated. After so many hours of talking with a psychiatric doctor she signed me in to Knockbracken Health care Home. As I was waiting for the ambulance to take me over some members of my family came into the hospital. Some of them said not to go to Knockbracken and others said that I should if I wanted. After a long discussion I chose not to go. We then agreed to speak to the doctor, having spoken to her for a while, she agreed to sign me out as long as someone would stay with me. The doctor gave me tablets that she said would make me sleep. So we left the hospital and went back home. I very rarely drank alcohol and never took drugs or anything like that but I was so exhausted and stressed out I took more of the tablets the doctor gave me and I was knocked out. For the first time ever I was taking drugs even though they were legal. I was out for the world.

On the morning of same day in the hospital I had bumped into Mr X (one of my two former friends). He started talking very civil at first. He then asked "what about this business?" well, as I had recently learned that he was one of the organisers of the whole thing, I said to him that, yes, I was a bit queer or gay but that what was

being said didn't happen at all. He seemed completely happy at my admission of being bi or gay. That was enough for him. His nice civil manner disappeared and he flew into a rage about how he and others were gona stiff me or bury me later on. So I walked away noticing he personally hadn't got the guts to do anything there and then but I now knew it was coming in the night except with a mask on him and he would be with others. It was always his way to "lead" from the "back."

So, getting back to the drugs from the doctor. I was out for the count when I heard banging on my kitchen window. I thought I was fucking hearing things or dreaming. I was in cloud cook coo land. After a while I got up of the bed as the banging was still going on. I looked out my blinds and there was my dear friend outside so I opened the door. I noticed tears in the eyes of the angel. After a short pause I was advised to start packing my clothes. I was told that my car had been burnt out and that people were planning to attack me sometime later.

I knew this was it and that my story would never be believed as I would have no proof at that time. So I left my flat with my bag and went to a safe house. Later that same night a group of armed and masked thugs broke into several of my sister's homes in the Carrick Hill area terrifying the children in their beds. So much for them being worried about child abuse! They busted in, in the middle of the night threatening and terrifying five really young children. The next morning it was Sunday and of course the Sunday papers were full of wonderful stories about a senior republican abusing dozens of children

and using the football teams as a way of getting to them. My name was painted all over the area and in particular outside the homes of my family. Later on that day a wonderful good Samaritan, Mr X, came down and painted over the slogans. How very good he was; given that it was him just a few hours earlier that had helped paint the slogans and was responsible for organizing them. He also organised the press stories and the burning of my car and the attacks on my family. This was the same person that was going to kill me. This guy used to be my friend. Thank God he never used to be my enemy. If that's what he does to friends what would he do to enemies? I spent the next few days in hiding waiting to see what was happening. I was hearing more and more stories as the rumours had grown to a new height. I knew I would never be able to go back to Carrick Hill. Certainly not while these cowards had taken control of it letting drugs and thugs ruin the area. My best bet was to wait and see and to gather up evidence that would prove these people false. I knew this was going to be very hard but I knew I had no choice but to get my legal team to go to the courts to get the evidence that would prove my innocence. My legal team did apply to various bodies for copies of records etc, at the start the government bodies and organizations put obstacles in our way which in turn led to us having to take legal action in court to have the evidence disclosed to us. The allegations made against me were totally false. However, many people in the Carrick Hill area believed them. This was due to the hysteria which followed the accusations.

Chapter 7:

Hysteria: why people react!

Hysteria: can be a psychological conflict within ones self or a mass fear involving a whole community. It can be created from nothing into something. A person or persons use people's worst fears and abuse this accordingly to further their own selfish gain, without due consideration for others. It's known throughout the world that mass hysteria follows events such as witch-hunts for any particular reason. This can be used to turn whole families, communities, towns, or even countries against a person, group of people of another town or city and even country against one another.

Witch-Hunt: persecution of minority political-opponents or socially non-conformist groups without any regard for their guilt or innocence. Witch-hunts are often accompanied by a degree of public hysteria; for example, the McCarthy anti-communist hearings during the 1950s in the USA .**Hutchinson Encyclopedia**

One of the most well known and documented mass outbreaks of hysteria which involved whole communities was the Salem witch-hunt in North America in 1692. In Salem Village belonging to the parish of Salem Town there was a village minister called the Reverend

Samuel Parris. He had a daughter called Betty and a niece called Abigail Williams. These two young girls would be the lynch pins that would start the mass hysteria that led to the horrendous Salem Witch-hunts. This all emanated from their unusual behavior of fits and convulsions that at the time could not be explained and for reasons only known to them. In February 1692, in what later became known as the "Witch-House" owned by Judge Jonathan Corwin. The first of three women were questioned and examined by Corwin and his colleague Judge John Hawthorne in relation to what the two girls had been saying.

Over a year later from the girls' testaments and behaviour the unprecedented hysteria which followed the rumours, accusations and allegations led to the deaths of many innocent people; men, women and a child. At the gallows on Gallows Hill in Salem Town nineteen people were hanged and the rest died in gaol from torture. One of the most known tortured people was a man called Giles Corey. He was more known than the others because of his refusal to take part in his own trial. He was tortured for days on end and finally he had large stones placed on his chest in order to make him confess. He refused and as a result he died following two long agonising days with the stones slowly crushing and suffocating him. His uncommon valour and dignity by refusing to stand trial meant that legally he could not be tried and thus paved the way for his tormentors to carryout their "righteous" work, namely torture, "Pressed to Death."

Sarah Good was also well known:

What evil spirit have you familiarity with?

None.

Have you made no contract with the devil?

No.

Why do you hurt these children?

I do not hurt them. I scorn it.

Who do you employ then to do it?

I employ nobody.

What creature do you employ then?

No creature. I am falsely accused.

Dialogue based on the examination of Sarah Good by Judges

Hawthorne and Corwin,

from The Salem Witchcraft Papers, Book II, p.355

The following is a chronological order of the Salem Story

January 20th

Nine-year-old Elizabeth Parris and eleven-year-old Abigail Williams began to exhibit strange behaviour, such as blasphemous screaming, convulsive seizures, trance-like states and mysterious spells. Within a short time, several other Salem girls began to demonstrate similar behaviour.

Mid-February

Unable to determine any physical cause for the symptoms and dreadful behaviour, physicians concluded that the girls were under the influence of Satan.

Late February

Prayer services and community fasting were conducted by Reverend Samuel Parris in hopes of relieving the evil forces that plagued them. In an effort to expose the “witches”, John Indian baked a witch cake made with rye meal and the afflicted girls’ urine. This counter-magic was meant to reveal the identities of the “witches” to the afflicted girls. Pressured to identify the source of their affliction, the girls named three women, including Tituba, Parris’ Carib Indian slave, as witches. On February 29, warrants were issued for the arrests of Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. Although Osborne and Good maintained innocence, Tituba confessed to seeing the devil who appeared to her “sometimes like a hog and sometimes like a great dog”. What’s more, Tituba testified that there was a conspiracy of witches at work in Salem.

March 1st

Magistrates John Hawthorne and Jonathan Corwin examined Tituba, Sarah Good, and Sarah Osborne in the meeting house in Salem Village. Tituba confessed to practicing witchcraft. The next weeks, other townspeople came forward and testified that they, too, had been harmed by or had seen strange apparitions of some of the community members. As the witch-hunt continued, accusations were made against many different people. Frequently denounced were women whose behaviour or economic circumstances were somehow disturbing to the social order and conventions of the time. Some of the accused had previous records of criminal activity, including witchcraft, but others

were faithful churchgoers and people of high standing in the community.

March 12th

Martha Corey is accused of witchcraft.

March 19th

Rebecca Nurse was denounced as a witch.

March 21st

Martha Corey was examined before Magistrates Hawthorne and Corwin.

March 24th

Rebecca Nurse was examined before Magistrates Hawthorne and Corwin.

March 28th

Elizabeth Proctor was denounced as a witch.

April 3rd

Sarah Cloyce, Rebecca Nurse's sister, was accused of witchcraft.

April 11th

Elizabeth Proctor and Sarah Cloyce were examined before Hawthorne, Corwin, Deputy Governor Thomas Danforth, and Captain Samuel Sewall. During this examination, John Proctor was also accused and imprisoned.

April 19th

Abigail Hobbs, Bridget Bishop, Giles Corey, and Mary Warren were examined. Only Abigail Hobbs confessed.

William Hobbs

"I can deny it to my dying day."

April 22nd

Nehemiah Abbott, William and Deliverance Hobbs, Edward and Sarah Bishop, Mary Easty, Mary Black, Sarah Wildes, and Mary English were examined before Hawthorne and Corwin. Only Nehemiah Abbott was cleared of charges.

May 2nd

Sarah Morey, Lydia Dustin, Susannah Martin, and Dorcas Hoar were examined by Hawthorne and Corwin.

Dorcas Hoar

"I will speak the truth as long as I live."

May 4th

George Burroughs was arrested in Wells, Maine.

May 9th

Burroughs was examined by Hawthorne, Corwin, Sewall, and William Stoughton. One of the afflicted girls, Sarah Churchill, was also examined.

May 10th

George Jacobs, Sr. and his granddaughter Margaret were examined before Hawthorne and Corwin. Margaret confessed and testified that her grandfather and George Burroughs were both witches. Sarah Osborne died in prison in Boston.

Margaret Jacobs

"... They told me if I would not confess I should be put down into the dungeon and would be hanged, but if I would confess I should save my life."

May 14th

Increase Mather returned from England, bringing with him a new charter and the new governor, Sir William Phips.

May 18th

Mary Easty was released from gaol. Yet, due to the outcries and protests of her accusers, she was arrested a second time.

May 27th

Governor Phips set up a special Court of Oyer and Terminer comprised of seven judges to try the witchcraft cases. Appointed were Lieutenant Governor William Stoughton, Nathaniel Saltonstall, Bartholomew Gedney, Peter Sergeant, Samuel Sewall, Wait Still Winthrop, John Richards, John Hawthorne, and Jonathan Corwin.

These magistrates based their judgments and evaluations on various kinds of intangible evidence, including direct confessions, supernatural attributes (such as "witch marks"), and reactions of the afflicted girls. Spectral evidence, based on the assumption that the Devil could assume the "spectre" of an innocent person, was relied upon despite its controversial nature.

May 31st

Martha Carrier, John Alden, Wilmott Redd, Elizabeth Howe, and Phillip English were examined before Hawthorne, Corwin, and Gedney.

June 2nd

Initial session of the Court of Oyer and Terminer. Bridget Bishop was the first to be pronounced guilty of witchcraft and condemned to death.

Early June

Soon after Bridget Bishop's trial, Nathaniel Saltonstall resigned from the court, dissatisfied with its proceedings.

June 10th

Bridget Bishop was hanged in Salem, the first official execution of the Salem witch trials.

Bridget Bishop

"I am no witch. I am innocent. I know nothing of it."

Following her death, accusations of witchcraft escalated, but the trials were not unopposed. Several townspeople signed petitions on behalf of accused people they believed to be innocent.

June 29th -30th

Rebecca Nurse, Susannah Martin, Sarah Wildes, Sarah Good and Elizabeth Howe were tried for witchcraft and condemned.

Rebecca Nurse

"Oh Lord, help me! It is false. I am clear. For my life now lies in your hands...."

Mid-July

In an effort to expose the witches afflicting his life, Joseph Ballard of nearby Andover enlisted the aid of the accusing girls of Salem. This action marked the beginning of the Andover witch-hunt.

July 19th

Rebecca Nurse, Susannah Martin, Elizabeth Howe, Sarah Good, and Sarah Wildes were executed.

Elizabeth Howe

"If it was the last moment I was to live, God knows I am innocent..."

Susannah Martin

& I have no hand in witchcraft."

August 2nd -6th

George Jacobs, Sr., Martha Carrier, George Burroughs, John and Elizabeth Proctor, and John Willard were tried for witchcraft and condemned.

Martha Carrier

"...I am wronged. It is a shameful thing that you should mind these folks that are out of their wits."

August 19th

George Jacobs, Sr., Martha Carrier, George Burroughs, John Proctor, and John Willard were hanged on Gallows Hill.

George Jacobs

"Because I am falsely accused. I never did it."

September 9th

Martha Corey, Mary Easty, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Dorcas Hoar, and Mary Bradbury were tried and condemned.

Mary Bradbury

"I do plead not guilty. I am wholly innocent of such wickedness."

September 17th

Margaret Scott, Wilmott Redd, Samuel Wardwell, Mary Parker, Abigail Faulkner, Rebecca Eames, Mary Lacy, Ann Foster, and Abigail Hobbs were tried and condemned.

September 19th

Giles Corey was pressed to death for refusing a trial.

September 21st

Dorcas Hoar was the first of those pleading innocent to confess. Her execution was delayed.

September 22nd

Martha Corey, Margaret Scott, Mary Easty, Alice Parker, Ann Pudeator, Wilmott Redd, Samuel Wardwell, and Mary Parker were hanged.

October 8th

After 20 people had been executed in the Salem witch-hunt, Thomas Brattle wrote a letter criticizing the witchcraft trials. This letter had great impact on Governor Phips, who ordered that reliance on spectral and intangible evidence no longer be allowed in trials.

October 29th

Governor Phips dissolved the Court of Oyer and Terminer.

November 25th

The General Court of the colony created the Superior Court to try the remaining witchcraft cases which took place in May, 1693. This time no one was convicted.

Mary Easty

"...if it be possible no more innocent blood be shed..."

...I am clear of this sin."

One of the last episodes of witch hysteria in the Western world took place in Salem. The Salem witch-hunt was the largest witch-hunt in colonial New England. Three hundred and fifty people were accused of witchcraft in New England; one hundred and eighty five of those were in Salem there were two Salem's, Salem Village

and Salem Town. Many villagers wanted their community to separate from the town. Samuel Parris, who became the village's minister in 1689, was a controversial member of the community from the time he arrived. Parris became one of the loudest voices calling for condemnation of accused witches. The outbreak of accusation began in his own home and quickly spread to the home of his allies, Thomas and Ann Putnam. Some historians have accused these two families of being among the chief instigators of the witch-hunts.

The witch accusations began in Salem after a slave by the name of Tituba had told stories of voodoo from her native land of Barbados. The young girls, mainly Betty and Abigail Williams, were caught up in these stories and started dabbling in the unknown. The story goes that the Williams girls, along with their friends, made a makeshift crystal ball by floating an egg in a glass of water, as they had seen Tituba do. One of the girls thought she saw an image of a coffin in the glass of water, and with this they became scared. Betty and the other girls supposedly started having fits in January. The Reverend John Hale witnessed the fits. The symptoms of the fits also included loss of hearing, speech, and sight, loss of memory, loss of appetite; hallucinations, and sensations of being pinched by invisible hands and bitten by invisible mouths. Doctors could not find a medical reason for the girls' strange behavior. They concluded that Betty and the other girls, who ranged in age from nine to twenty, were bewitched.

The relatives of the afflicted girls tried different alternatives to obtain answers. Mary Sibley, the aunt of one of the afflicted girls,

called on Tituba with a plan to allegedly use magic to unmask the witches. Although Mary Sibley had resorted to witchcraft to seek out the witches, she was not accused of any crime. As the craze went on, it became obvious that the authorities were selective. They dismissed some charges as absurd. They seemed to pursue most strongly people with little power or people against whom Parris or the Putnam's already had a gripe.

The girls started accusing people of witchcraft and this resulted in three arrests. The three women accused were Tituba, Sarah Good and Sarah Osborne. One was a slave and the other two "social outcasts". Neither of these women attended church, which the community considered to be a sin against God. When the three accused women appeared before the town magistrates, the afflicted girls began twitching and falling into convulsions. The girls claimed that the accused women's specters or spirits were tormenting them by pinching and biting them or by appearing as birds or animals. None but the afflicted could see the specters, but spectral evidence was used as evidence and was as powerful as physical evidence. The girls began to be taken from town to town, to flush out the witches. Before the witch-hunts were over, people from more than twenty other communities had been accused.

Ministers of the village had mostly been silent throughout the trials and the hangings. But in October one of the ministers, Increase Mather told the court, "*It was better that the suspected witches should escape, than that one innocent person should be condemned.*" The court was soon disbanded and a new court was organised to

complete the trials. Most of the accused were now acquitted. Eight were convicted and sentenced to death, but reprieves were granted to all of them. The court met for the last time on May 9, 1693, and all accused were acquitted that day, putting a final end to the accusations and the witch hysteria in and around Salem.

There is no more widely known example of the effects of hysteria than that of Jesus.

The Pharisees and High Priests saw Jesus as threat to their teachings and way of life and so started a campaign to discredit him and eventually get rid of him.

They went so far as to go to the "hated Romans" to have him arrested and brought before the Roman Governor. Pilate announced to the Chief Priests and the crowd; "I find no basis for a charge against this man." With loud shouts the crowd demanded that he be crucified and their shouts prevailed. So Pilate even though he knew Jesus was innocent was intimidated by the hysteria of the crowd and decided to grant their demand. He washed his hands of him and surrendered Jesus to their will.

More modern out breaks have happened closer to home:

In February 2006 a man in his forties Thomas Halloran was beaten to death in Carrickfergus whilst visiting his sister. He was beaten in an alleyway and left to die alone. The Police released a

statement on 2nd May; stating that "people in the area of the death are shielding the killers of a completely innocent man," they stated "Rumours of the man indecently exposing himself were completely false and the man is totally-innocent." This was too late for the man and his family.

In England a woman called Sally Clark, was convicted of killing her young children in the late 1990's. Top doctors and scientist gave evidence at her trials which led to her conviction. When she was imprisoned she was attacked and beaten on several occasions by other prisoners and she was called all sorts of names. She was classed as a serial baby killer. This was all fuelled by the media and rumors that surrounded her case. She spent over three and a half years in gaol and was released on January 2003 after lengthy court appeals. At Sally's final appeal eleven of the world's top experts said the babies died from natural causes (staphylococcal septicaemia) an early form of meningitis. Her conviction and imprisonment by the courts was more in dealing with public hysteria and nothing to do with justice or truth.

Angela Cannings and Sally Clark were both convicted of murdering their children only to later to be found not guilty on appeal. Misleading and contradicting evidence originally used to determine their guilt. Nothing can bring back the years they lost and who can imagine the fear, frustration and hopelessness they must have felt trying to prove their innocence. Hated in gaol, shunned and abused for the most despised of crimes that of taking the lives of children. Yet they had done nothing wrong and left even unable to grieve for their loss.

In England: John Leslie ex Blue Peter presenter and This Morning presenter was charged with Indecent assault in 2002 leading to him having to leave This Morning. He was eventually cleared in 2003 but only after his life was destroyed. He will never be able to reclaim the good character he had.

On 26 January 2001, **Norman Moffat (73)** was stabbed and died in Coleraine after being mistaken for a paedophile. Is this the justice we so much rely on? Where is the justice if it's only innocent being punished.

A Music **Teacher of 20 years**, Darryl Gee was convicted in 2001 of rape of a pupil 10 years previously and sentenced to 8 years in gaol. He died before his conviction was cleared. Again too late for him and his family. He had suffered years of torment and beatings in gaol. John Hudson was convicted of sexually assaulting the same woman and sentenced to 12 years in 2000. Both Judgments were made on the word of the accuser. John's conviction was also cleared on appeal when a psychiatric expert said the accuser's recollection of events was "implausible". A spokesperson for the court at the time said it was an extreme and tragic example of the consequences of malicious allegations and underlines the need for new procedures.

Again in England a **young women** called Carol Hanson was convicted of murder and spent twenty-five years in gaol. One of the very few women to spend such a long time in gaol. She finally committed suicide after having lost faith in the legal system that imprisoned her. Carol believed for so long she would one day wake

up an innocent person. She never lived to wake up an innocent women but is now free in heaven.

We also have all our own **political miscarriages** of justice such as: the Birmingham six and the Guildford four. These are closer to home and we know how the mass hysteria in England forced cops to beat confessions out of any Irish suspects. These examples should be warnings from the past, with all the pro British propaganda in the newspapers over the years it should have made our local society more open and not to believe everything is being written in the press today.

How many victim's are there in our Criminal Justice System? We seem to be punishing the innocent and rewarding the real offenders. Has it come down to who can afford the best legal team? Sally Clark and her husband were both solicitors with connections and financial security. Even they were left fighting for their lives and in near financial ruin. What about those caught in such situations; who have to rely on legal aid, don't understand the system and have no support? With charges like these so many are left waiting years for their case to be heard and in the meantime they have to leave their homes and belongings and are left with nothing, their reputations shattered forever no matter what the outcome.

We have no way of knowing if someone is "genuine" or "malicious" now, unless the allegations are backed up with medical evidence, witnesses, cameras etc,. This is not justice, it makes it harder for genuine victims and it's extremely easy for anyone with a grudge against another person to make an accusation and in all cases the accuser is helped and protected by everyone. The accused on the

other hand is shunned, outcast, beaten, murdered, their children taken away, forced to flee their homes, lives destroyed and reputations ruined etc. All this because someone holds a grudge or whatever the reason. It is not acceptable these days for rumours to be treated as fact and accusations to be treated as gospel. It's only when it comes to your own door step do you realise the devastation that malicious accusations cause. More importantly, not just to the accused but to their whole family. What happens to the accusers after the accusations are proved false? They go on living in the community, continue life as normal and no police action is ever taken against them as if it is insignificant and not worth taking.

We have a tendency to believe in accusers and disbelieve the accused. This in no way serves justice. It is one of the main areas of concern which we have fought for, that of Freedom, Justice and Peace. It has to be recognised that there are many genuine victims and that their assailants have gotten away. But adding to rumour and hysteria does not help either. With all the miscarriages we have seen in the past the last action we should be involved in is that of feeding rumour, innuendo, and adding to hysteria. We should know better than most how innocent people can be falsely accused and wrongly imprisoned just because of hysteria which follows witch-hunts.

Chapter 8:

Carrick Hill Hysteria

Sexual crimes are the worst crimes anyone can commit. That seems to be most peoples view. The rumours flowed wild in Carrick Hill, graffiti on the walls, houses being attacked with paint and stones, families being attacked and threatened. On top of this two well known Carrick Hill people; one a community worker and one a self proclaimed victim's spokesman organised and gave interviews to local news papers slandering me with absolutely no proof of anything except the word of a Mr B, a convicted criminal and suspected drug dealer. This same person had actually been convicted of indecent exposure, mainly flashing his penis in the street and for stabbing another man with a knife. Yet his word was taken as gospel. Why? His friends Mr A and Mr C that came along and joined him in their quest for fame and fortune. Why?

As I stated earlier, during the community work which I was involved with, I did work with children. In fact, I was chairperson of St Patrick's Carrick Hill Community Centre. This was a registered charity with all the people involved working voluntary. We worked with the BELB, St. Patrick's Parish, Belfast City Council, Down and Connor football league and various other bodies. I loved this work so

much and I never got tired of taking the kids away. Anything to keep them out of trouble. I did nothing but try my hardest to find the youth of Carrick Hill a better way of life. I had a large family in Carrick Hill and many of my nephews and nieces would have been part of the youth centre. I raised the money for a mini bus and had the prospect of a premise with the backing of the church. However, Mr Y the community worker from Carrick Hill, saw this as a threat to his status quo. He was totally against me setting a premise up as "it would take grants away from him." So, he was certainly glad to see me out of the road. "Justice my Ass" it was his luxury life style he was interested in keeping.

Having worked with the youth of the area for the last couple of years I can understand wholeheartedly why lots of people were angry when the rumours were circulating. I don't blame any parent who expressed concern about their child under my charge. With Mr X and Y organising the hate campaign against me and the newspapers following suit, the graffiti, the accusations etc, any sensible parent would be right to be concerned. I respect those parents who asked their kids whether any indecent behaviour had occurred between myself and them. They did this solely out of natural concern. They also reluctantly told some of my friends that they asked their children this and shared this concern with me via my relatives and friends. These good people owe me no apology and their thoughts for me are welcomed. I take issue only with those few parents that tried to blame me for the anti-social-behaviour, break-ins etc that some of their sons have since been involved in...

First and foremost I blame Mr B the drug thug who made the first allegation. But more importantly Mr X and Y, the two bastards that used and manipulated him and the others who fed the rumours that fuelled the hate towards me. They organised their meetings and interviews with everyone they could think of. When members of Sinn Fein and CRJ went into Carrick Hill to try and bring a sense of calm and to dispel some of the hysteria, they were verbally abused by the friends and families of those that fuelled the hysteria and those that made allegations.

Some of my family members were attacked and as were their homes. In fact, my sister was to get a new house in Carrick Hill after living all her life in a flat, only to be told by the Housing Executive that she couldn't move in to her new house because they received a threat stating that people would burn it down with her and her child in it if she accepted the allocation. These are all facts and not rumours like the accusations made against myself.

The reason that so many Carrick Hill people were up in arms was that when they heard the rumours they automatically thought they were about the kids I was working with. It only became clear to people some months later that this was not the case at all. Never the less the damage was done and the instigators never gave up but continued to try and find other people to make allegations.

It was put to one person who was close to me that if "they wanted to live and stay in the area" they would have to go and make an allegation against me. This is the type of inhuman and selfish activity Mr Y and X were involved in. They had convinced local

newspapers and a whole community into believing I was a serial sex monster and turned many friends against me. With all this hysteria and me gone it suited these two just fine. They knew I had earned the respect of the majority of the community in Carrick Hill and surrounding areas. This annoyed and frustrated the two men in question. For several months they fuelled the hysteria which swept the Carrick Hill area back in 2003. This was to make sure I would never again challenge them in their set ways. That was one of a prehistoric mindset they were locked into. From the time I got out of gaol and worked for the community one of them in particular, Mr Y, consistently objected to me working as a community leader. This was because his old prehistoric ways were being challenged and he didn't like it. My objective was only to work for the community and not against it. His was to put himself first and then appear in a newspaper each week as if he was actually doing something. It's so easily explained now how he has the time to pose for so many photographs.

Chapter 9:

The Police

On the 19th September 2003 I voluntarily walked into Antrim Road police station. Under threat, mentally and physically exhausted, I gave an interview to police concerning the accusations made against me. This was in relation to three men aged in their twenties Mr A, B, and C who were brought to the police station on the 16th by my former friend and a so called victim's spokesman Mr X.

These three adult men went in and made an number of allegations against me saying that I had abused them at different places over some years. When I got into the police station I was accompanied with Gerry Hyland, my solicitor from Madden & Finucane. He spoke briefly with the cops. The cops told him that they had heard of the allegations from word on the street and from what several newspapers had reported the previous days and weeks beforehand. The police told my solicitor that they were surprised at all the media reports as the actual statements that were made against me resembled nothing like what the newspaper stories were telling people. I instructed Gerry to tell the cops I would admit to anything that was true. He told me that I should remain silent or deny all these allegations. However, I said to him "I am fucking making a statement and that's that." I was fucking wrecked, defeated and under threat.

The police informed Gerry that they had been instructed by their superiors to arrest me, charge me and to make me appear in court the following morning when I would be remanded in custody. However, they said that they would only carryout their interviews, charge me and release me on my own recognizance to appear at a Magistrates' court several weeks later on the 8th of October 2003 with a binding of four hundred pounds.

They did this, I believe, because they had realised that all the stories in the media were exactly that, only stories. I have to be completely honest and state that when I went to the police I thought I would be treated like shit, humiliated by the cops and laughed at by them. I automatically thought that they would only be too glad to charge me and lock me up because of my republican background. So in anticipation of this treatment I prepared myself with a bag of some clothes etc, for gaol.

To me, everyone in the world wanted me locked up. It seemed everyone believed all the stories or at least some of them. At the time there was no doubt in my mind that the cops would have done that, simply because everyone seemed to want it especially people in Carrick Hill. To my surprise the police didn't lock me up. Here were these police guys who had a golden opportunity to get a sworn enemy. A republican who some years earlier went to gaol for conspiracy to murder a policeman... Someone who even his own community and the press wanted locked up. Yet they chose not too, even acting against the orders of their own superiors. For the first time in a few weeks people, total strangers and above all policemen had been so just

to me. Not even from many of my former comrades did I receive this total objectiveness. What can I say to that but acknowledge and thank the decency and dignity that those two cops showed me. I personally felt they knew I had been wronged. This to me also showed that times have certainly changed and for the better. I believe that they have dealt with dozens and dozens of sexual crimes in the past and they know when false accusations are being made.

Even though I am a republican and still have concerns with elements of the PSNI, I have to acknowledge that there are many good men who want nothing more than to be ordinary hard working police officers and have no time for politics. That's the type of police service a community needs and it's my belief that it should be guys like those two who should be running the police. I also believe that what should happen is that all the British, securocrat servants and administrators who run things now on behalf of their political masters should be paid off, and the sooner the better. An end to political policing is what we need.

People need and want a decent police service. The drug problem is ever growing. The change that people will see in five or six years from now will be unbelievable. People need only look at how drugs have destroyed whole cities and towns in America and closer to home in Dublin and even closer in Ballymena. The number of addicts is on the rise each year with hard drugs getting as easy to obtain as the softer drugs. These unfortunate people will resort to any madness to get their next fix. It's up to people now to work with; each other, their elected representatives, Community Restorative Justice and the police

if they are to prevent this from happening. Policing Powers need to be devolved from Whitehall securocrats and the special branch here and put into the hands of our own elected officials. It's a known fact that house break-ins, muggings and assaults have sky rocketed. It might be alright for people to sit and say it's not happening in my street or my community but it is and it's only when it comes to your door will you realise that. Now even the drug dealers in my former home of Carrick Hill run the place. They are able to; beat, intimidate and extort young teenagers for money or even worse force them to sell drugs. These people now operate with impunity and it's they that are the true child abusers. And, for those community representatives who often have their picture in the local paper each week alongside known drug dealers, they need to stop posing and actually do some preventative work. It's no use complaining when the deed is done. It's pointless complaining that kids are wrecking the area and have in fact destroyed the area. It's no use complaining that teens are running mad about the area on drugs when the people who actually sell them the drugs, work hand in hand with the community leaders in Carrick Hill. Whether the community leaders know or turn a blind eye to the drug trade is immaterial. It's the whole community that suffers and everyone in Carrick Hill knows who the dealers are. Prevention is the only way. If you want a decent neighbourhood you have to work hard for it. You can not build a community on new homes alone. It would be pointless having a new home for everyone when the necessary amenities and recreational facilities aren't there to facilitate the growing population. There is not one leisure centre in the densely

populated nationalist North Belfast. Why haven't we seen one go up over the last few years. Tens of millions of pounds are being poured in to unionist areas of North Belfast as a reward for all the violence and damage they have caused, over the past ten years while it was alleged they were on cease-fires. It's a disgrace. Meanwhile there are plenty of leisure centres in unionist areas already. Indeed they are presently building a complete new one on the shore road / York road area. All these are factors in reducing the number of criminal attacks and behaviour.

Chapter 10:

Lying low Living in a Hostel

I stayed with my close relative for nearly a week. After I had gone to the police, I contacted a friend and priest Fr. John Friel, of the Passionate Order. John worked from the Ardoyne community. He had spent many years in Dublin, Glasgow, Boston, and Belfast helping the most disadvantaged people. John was also a psychologist. He and his colleagues provide a wonderful service to the north Belfast community. He was the gaol Chaplin at Long Kesh and also Maghaberry gaol for many years. I contacted him and asked if he was able to get me anywhere to stay for the next few months while I faced these charges. He was only too glad to help. John came and met me immediately after I was released from the police station. I was with my solicitor Gerry Hyland. John started ringing around to find somewhere for me to stay. He told us that it would take a few hours but that he would go and check things out. Gerry then drove me to my relative's house to wait until John had found somewhere. It was only around an hour later when John phoned back and told me that his friend managed a hostel in South Belfast and that it would be OK for

me to go and stay there, so he gave me the address. I collected a few things from my relative's house and then left with Gerry for the hostel.

When I got to the hostel I was met by some of the staff who worked in it. They had been expecting me and had a room ready for me. Gerry then said "good luck, I will contact you soon" we shook hands and went on his way. I would later have my main solicitor, Andrew Russell take full control of my legal case as Gerry did not normally deal with criminal cases but mainly libel, compensation etc.,

I remained in the hostel for over two years while waiting on my legal proceedings to take their course. I was treated with total respect by all the hostel staff and I made some friends among them. Some treated me very well and more surprising the protestant staff members. With all the hype and stories that were in the papers over those few weeks I was amazed at the care and support that was shown towards me. They didn't know me! For all they knew of me, was that from the media, that I was a serial sex monster. Innocent or guilty that didn't matter to them. They were more than decent to me and have since become my friends. Life is so strange indeed. The people you expect to help and support you disown you and turn their backs on you and some of those were life long friends "Et Tu, Brute?" Yet again here I had total strangers not judging me but treating me as they would treat any of their friends or family.

I slept that first night I was in the hostel for the first time in almost two weeks. Even though it was in Belfast and I was still expecting thugs to attack me I still slept, I guess all the exhaustion

caught up with me. It was a huge relief to get passed that first hurdle.

Living in the hostel was slightly similar to being in gaol. Not that I was locked up or anything, but just the character of the place; large group of men staying under one roof, different rooms but sharing the bathrooms, kitchen and having a communal room for pool and television etc. In that way it did remind me of gaol. Of course I could have left it at any time, but I didn't, I stayed for the length of time I needed too. The help and support from staff members helped me get through those two and a half years, some more so than others. Even though I found it hard being away from my wee daughter and other family and friends, I picked myself up a bit in the hostel. It was very slowly shown to me that not everyone considered me an evil beast. It was now clear that it was only those few people here and there, but mostly a handful of thugs in Carrick Hill, who continued to assault and intimidate my family. They gave the impression that they spoke for the whole of Carrick Hill but I have since come to know that they don't. I have got dozens and dozens of cards and letters, and have had people praying and lighting candles for me. Lots of people asking for me and stating how wrong it was and how they are ashamed of the people involved in it all. I can't thank the good people of Carrick Hill enough for their messages of support throughout these past few years. It was those messages that gave me the will to stand up in court and fight the allegations.

Whilst I was at the hostel at times I felt really alone, depressed and frightened. To help me cope and take my mind of my problems I tried to make the best of the difficult situation. I helped organise several

charity carwashes and raised several thousand pounds for Chest Heart & Stroke association and other similar groups. I also packed tens of thousands of letters into envelopes for different charities. However the best piece of charity work we did was organizing several carwashes over a period of a few weeks to raise money (£1,750) to buy a fishing boat for the Sri Lanka Tsunami Appeal. We got the boat and named it after the hostel and now people on the other-side of the world can earn a living and feed a village. I also helped organise and turned a piece of lawn belonging to the hostel into a fabulous show garden. The committee of the hostel resourced some money for equipment and material to transform the lawn. This was a therapeutic way for me to take my mind of my long legal delay.

On the 31st August 2004, I was assaulted by a thug with a baseball bat whilst I was out walking from the hostel. On the 7th September the police came to visit me. They came to deliver an intelligence message that they received from one of their informers.

The message read:

Dated 7th September 2004

"Intelligence indicates that republican paramilitaries are currently attempting to identify the whereabouts of Paul Stitt with a view to carrying out some form of attack against him. (it is believed that Stitt is currently at 'address in Belfast')."

After they gave me this warning they told me to watch myself and alter my movements. They didn't elaborate on which organization was involved in the planned attack.

The police put my assault of the August 31st case in the local edition of crime beat on 15th September 2004 it went:

"Police in Castlereagh are appealing for information following an incident that is believed to have occurred on the Saintfield Road on Tuesday August 31st. at around 4.10pm a man was standing on a traffic island while crossing the road adjacent to the rear of Forestside shopping centre. It is believed a second man approached him from behind and assaulted him a number of times with a baseball bat. The attacker is believed to have been wearing a red football shirt and grey coloured tracksuit bottoms. The assailant then ran through traffic and across the road to a waiting, red Peugeot 306 car which made off with a second male toward Belfast city centre. Police in Castlereagh are appealing for anyone who witnessed the incident to contact them."

Even though the road was packed with about two hundred cars at the time of the attack, not one person reported it. I believe this was because the previous week one of the Sunday newspapers put an article in their paper with the headlines "republican sex accused assaulted while out walking." It's the belief of the police that this article put people of contacting them as no-one would have any

sympathy for someone accused of sex crimes. Another local paper put the story of me being assaulted on the 31st August in their paper. It is my firm belief that this local newspaper deliberately put my photo and address in their article to make known my whereabouts to people so that I would be attacked. That's my opinion and I'm basing that on the false stories that the same newspaper printed about me the previous year when the accusations were first made. That paper was not interested in justice it was into sensationalism. I was a way they could sell more papers.

So I contacted my solicitor and asked him what action we could take against this paper for putting my life in danger. Andrew, my solicitor, phoned me back a few days later and sent me a copy of a "first step" which was to inform the Press Complaints Commission

The letter sent was:

"Dear Sirs, Re: complaint against "newspaper" in the name of Paul Stitt. We refer to the above whom we represent and to an article that appeared in the "newspaper" on 08/09/04 (copy enclosed). Mr Stitt wishes to lodge a complaint against the "newspaper" in relation to this article on the basis that it breaches Clause 3 of the Press Complaints Code of Practice as it is an unjustifiable intrusion into his private life and is motivated solely to put his life in further danger. It is the case that Mr Stitt appears before Belfast Magistrates' Court at present accused of a number of sexual assaults. Mr Stitt is presently on bail for these charges and is residing at the name address pending

his trial. Due to the sensitivity surrounding this case, the details of his residency have been as much as possible kept secret and disclosure of this information has at all times sought to be controlled. The reason for this has been due to threats that Mr Stitt has received in relation to his own personal safety both during his remand appearances at court and outside of this environment. These are circumstances that the "newspaper" would be aware of and indeed comment upon in their article in relation to abuse received by Mr Stitt in court. These threats to his life and safety were all the more real after being assaulted close to his residence and subsequently being warned by the PSNI about his personal safety. Mr Stitt was accused of a number of offences however he is and remains throughout the court procedure innocent until proven guilty. He is a vulnerable person under threat of attacks as a result of the allegations made against him. He is the victim of an assault and has been warned by police of possible further attacks. In light of the above there can be no justification whatsoever for the article that appeared in the "newspaper" and the manner in which it was printed. Information in relation to Mr Stitt's residence was printed in large type under a picture of his face and also a picture identifying his residence. Whilst the article purported to report an assault on Mr Stitt, its real purpose was to identify Mr Stitt to the community at large and to highlight where he was staying. This is an unprofessional piece of journalism which is a clear breach of the Codes of Practice and has placed Mr Stitt in a position of increased vulnerability. As stated we enclose a copy of the article for your attention and would be obliged for your consideration of our client's

complaint. A copy of the complaint has been forwarded to the editor of the "newspaper". If you have any queries or difficulties please do not hesitate to contact Andrew Russell of our office."

Following that the Press Complaints Commission replied to us several times:

"PCC, 11/10/04. Dear Mr Russell, I will be dealing with your client's complaint against the "newspaper" before it goes to the Commission for a decision under the Code and I will keep you informed of the progress of our investigation into this matter. A copy of this letter has been sent to the newspaper and I will write to you again once I have received their response."

A second letter explaining the PCC mechanics and intentions followed and stated:

"I am enclosing a booklet which explains how the Press Complaints Commission deals with complaints. I also enclose a copy of the newspaper and magazine industry's Code of Practice under which we operate. The Commission's jurisdiction extends only to those newspapers and magazine's that belong to one of the five publishers' associations – the Newspaper Publishers Association, the Newspaper Society, the Scottish Daily Newspaper Society, the Scottish Publisher's Association, and Periodical Publishers' Association – which contribute to the Press Board of Finance, the body which

collects the industrial levy that funds self-regulation. (More information about our funding is available from request and on our website.) While 98% of the UK publications fall under our control, the "newspaper in question" is not one of them. It therefore has no obligation to accept our decision, or even to co-operate with our enquiries. Nonetheless, in the spirit of mediation we will approach the newspaper informally and seek to resolve your complaint if possible. If such a conclusion turns out to be unachievable we shall then review our involvement."

A further letter was sent by the PCC to Andrew dated 19th October 2004.

"The Commission has now received a response to your complaint from the managing Director of the "newspaper," a copy of which is enclosed. As you will see, he has sought to defend the article, in particular the inclusion of the reference to the hostel. Before a decision can be made as to how this matter might be taken forward, I should be grateful to receive any further comments you may wish to make in response. Indeed, it is our aim to bring about the amicable resolution of the complaint if at all possible; I would be pleased to hear your thoughts as to how that might be achieved, which I will explore with the "newspaper" I should be pleased to receive your response in the next seven days if at all possible. Please let me know if you foresee any difficulty in replying within that time-frame."

The reply from the "newspaper" was one of denial, it stated clearly that it was in the right and was standing over its article.

The following was the response the Managing Director sent to the PCC:

"Thank you for your letter of 11 October 2004. The named person is no longer the editor of this newspaper. And was not the editor of the paper in September 2004 when the article "Sex assaults accused told of new threat" appeared. You may also wish to note that the address of that newspaper has now changed to the address below. I am the publisher of the "newspaper" and take full responsibility for the article in question. I refute all the allegations made by Stitt and am distressed at the suggestion that the purpose of this article was to put his life in danger. That allegation is without foundation. Our newspapers are involved in no conspiracy to cause harm to Mr Stitt and have no reason to wish to encourage others to harm him. The article involved reported, as is our duty and right, on an attack on Mr Stitt. It also revealed that the PSNI had visited Mr Stitt to warn him his life is in danger. Those are news worthy matters. Mr Stitt complains that we revealed his present residence in the paper and claims this location was kept secret. In fact, it was a matter of public record that he was staying at the hostel at that time. It is alleged that "information in relation to Mr Stitt's residence was printed in large type" the typeface used is in fact the normal typeface (and size) used in all captions in the paper." I believe that in the coverage of Mr

Stitt's case, our reporters have acted professionally at all times and have stressed that the charges against Mr Stitt remain just that; Charges. We will continue to treat this case with the sensitivity it deserves while ensuring that it is adequately covered in the public interest."

So you can see that the "newspaper" stood over its articles, stating they were only charges and remain charges. Yet they continued to call me "sex assault accused" instead of my proper name. Also my address was not a matter of public record. If it were, the republican paramilitary group searching for my whereabouts the week before would have easily known then. A professional way to print the article, if needed, would have been to print the story without my picture and the address of my residence. Why did they identify my address if they knew I was under threat?

Not once did the "newspaper" ask me for my side of the story! They published dozens of articles about me which I will give some quotes from. (You will be able read and can judge if it was fair, professional and ethical).

*"The **paedophile** was released from prison under the terms of the Good Friday Agreement."*

*"Has been **abusing** both girls and boys for the past 16 years."*

*"Mr X, an ex-republican prisoner said that the man had admitted to him personally that he had been **abusing children**."*

*"Former republican prisoner had **admitted** to sexually abusing **ten** local children."*

"The offender is a well-known republican ex-prisoner."

*"It is our hope that the **paedophile** in question will be brought to book to face his accusers so that the children of Carrick Hill will know that justice has been done."*

*"More than a **dozen** local young people have been **abused** by a former republican prisoner,"*

These are direct quotes from the newspaper articles. The "newspaper" had already found me guilty. The word alleged does not appear in any of these quotes. This totally contradicts what the Managing Director of the "newspaper" states in his letter to the Press Complaints Commission which was:

"I believe that in the coverage of Mr Stitt's case, our reporters have acted professionally at all times and have stressed that the charges against Mr Stitt remain just that; Charges."

Those quotes from previous articles don't suggest that they were just charges. Indeed they have called me a paedophile several times and accused me of abusing over a dozen children. They also say I admitted to Mr X, I abused ten children. I can say with certainty that Mr X is full of shit as is the "newspaper." What was said to Mr X, was that "I was gay or bi-sexual," Mr X used my admission of at "periods of my life" as being bi-sexual as an "admission" of sexual abuse. He used it to further his own selfish gain and destroy my character and reputation. Well, I will let people judge for themselves now that they are able to see another side of the story. My story is backed up with factual evidence and not rumours. I stood trial on accusations from between the years from 1985 to 1996 made by former friends, three adult males Mr A, B, and C. I did not face any charges at all connected with the work I was doing with the youth of Carrick Hill.

I continued living at the same address and I made the most of my time living in the hostel. Apart from doing charity work I was able to get some educational qualifications and also got to learn how to drive many mechanical vehicles which I have now licenses for. I have full computer training, plus many other certificates for various classes. Throughout my whole time in the hostel I was and still am amazed at how hard the staff worked for me. They got me the funding and resources to do all these various training courses. All this effort on my behalf from the staff just kept reminding me that people know when something isn't right and an injustice has happened. I believe that was their way of trying to show me, through their help and support.

While still in the hostel towards the end of 2005 I was again visited by police to warn me about my personal security. When they called up on the 16th November I automatically thought that they would warn me again about possible republican attacks on my person. However, it turned out this time to be from loyalist groups, the police message read:

"Police message, Paul Stitt, during a recent search of premises in Belfast, police recovered a number of documents. Examination of these documents, indicates that loyalist paramilitaries have acquired the following personal details in relation to you: my name and several addresses. This matter is the subject of an ongoing police investigation. You are advised to seek advice on and take steps to protect your personal security."

I was relieved when I found out that this time it was a warning by loyalist paramilitaries. Not that I welcomed it but I would rather be attacked at the hands of loyalists than those of republicans. I would have hated for republicans to have carried out attacks based on disgraceful rumours and character assassination plots by the likes of Mr X and the thugs he now associates himself with.

Again life continued as normal in the hostel considering the circumstances. I maintained as much a degree of normality as humanly possible for me to do so. Even though I was facing uncertain events each day, I battled on and on. I have met some new friends if nothing else comes out of this terrible predicament I was subjected to.

I know I can call them friends as they have shown me unconditional care.

During my stay at the hostel my mum died. These friends supported me both day and night. They were completely aware of my circumstances and did everything they could to help me. They went to my mum's funeral on my behalf, they bought lots of food, prepared it all and brought it over to my mum's wake. They brought me back and forth from the hospital while she was ill. They brought me to my mum's cremation service as well as attending it themselves. In only a short time frame they have shown me the true meaning of friendship. Up until these allegations were made I really thought I had many, many friends. I guess, I was incredibly wrong and that what I really only had were acquaintances. That old saying is spot on "*you don't really know who your friends are until that certain time of need in your life.*" Although I did have some help from old friends that I have known a life time, they were very few and far between. You know who you are, and thanks.

Chapter 11:

Court

On the 8th of October 2003, three weeks after I was at the police station, I was to appear in court for the first time. I knew that the mob would be down in full swing playing to the media and giving them something to write about. I had heard from a friend in Carrick Hill that elements within the community were actually knocking on doors and asking people to go down to court to shout abuse at me. They had also been saying how they were going to attack me on my way down to the court or in the court and for me to watch myself. Well I did this, with the help of Madden & Finucane solicitors an arrangement was made with the court staff that I would use an alternative entrance in the court and this would become the normal procedure for me over the next two years. The initial court appearance was attended by around thirty-five people, mainly from Carrick Hill. Having arrived at the court I was in a waiting room until my name was called by the court clerk. It had also been arranged by the court staff that my name would be called first, as was to happen on most occasions, so that I could be over and done with quickly so that the "rent-a-mob" would leave the court sooner. It suited the court and it suited me. In the court it's normal practice for anyone accused of a crime to stand in the dock and wait while the legal proceedings take their course. The dock has a

toughened glass wall around it so there was no chance of anyone getting near me. When I walked into the dock as my name was called out, I glanced at the public gallery and a group of thirty-five people, the very people that once would have talked to me, all started screaming abuse and insults at me. However, I held my head up and waited on the legal proceedings to finish. As the case continued the shouts continued from the gallery. Some of them were shouting "we're gona kill you," "we know where you live," "lock him up," "gaol him" etc,. But I knew that I would not be locked up as I understood what was happening legal-wise as it had been arranged beforehand. At the end of the proceedings the PPS (Public Prosecution Service) had formerly charged me with three sexual assaults against Mr A, B and C. As I knew this was going to happen it was no shock to me but the crowd enjoyed the fact that I was charged. My plea was "not guilty" and that was the end of the first appearance. As I was leaving the dock the crowd were annoyed that I wasn't getting locked up. They raised their voices tenfold but to no avail I wasn't getting locked up and that was that. My second appearance in court was to be the 3rd of December followed by a third in February, a fourth in April 7th and a fifth in May 5th and a continuation until November 17th 2004. January 2005 saw my arraignment and the trial was scheduled for February but was delayed several times after that.

The following few days after my initial appearance I appeared in the local newspapers as senior republican accused of indecent assaults. At least now the newspapers could only print facts as before they printed simple rumours and unbelievable stories which

led to my exile and to the hatred towards me. They can't do a Pontius Pilate and wash their hands of their part in the hysteria. It was the media who hyped up all the rumours and led to attacks on me, my family and friends. They are jointly responsible for putting me and my family through hell.

While I have the legal right to name the people that made the false accusations against me, I won't. Even though many people know who they actually are and even though their names have appeared in the newspapers at times. I won't name them because I won't do what they did to me. But I will refer to them as thugs, liars, complainants, or "so called victims" and as I refer to them individually Mr A, Mr B and Mr C. As the crowd was leaving the gallery at the first appearance they were also shouting to the policemen who were in charge of the case. They were shouting that it wasn't over yet and that they would get more people to make complaints against me in order to get me convicted. They proceeded to do so. Over the course of the next year several more people went to the police to make statements against me. I had then to arrange to go to the police station several more times to answer these accusations. Some of them were really wild and totally unbelievable. It got to the point where special cops assigned to sexual cases didn't even take them seriously and would not investigate them. The police now knew that there was a campaign against me and they knew it was being led by my former friends. They also knew that even if they had wanted to believe the accusations it was impossible to do so. One of the accusations referred to a sexual assault in a car. To my amazement the police told me and my solicitor

that they knew it wasn't true as they had been monitoring me for my republican activities and they knew what cars I'd had and when I'd had them. From their intelligence files, the cops were able to determine that this allegation in particular wasn't true. Some of the cops expressed to me that they were sorry and that this was nothing personal on their behalf. I understood that they had to carry out an investigation if a complaint was made.

On another occasion a girl went to the police (persuaded by Mr X) and made a statement saying I had raped her. She claimed I had persistently phoned her up dozens of times and intimidated her into having sex. The cops did an investigation and found that it had been quite the opposite. They had evidence that it was her who actually phoned me up dozens of times and could prove it couldn't have happened as she claimed. The cops put this to her and she quietly withdrew her statement saying she was sorry for wasting police time. Her exact withdrawal was as follows:

Statement received by Detective Constable LW;
Age of Witness (over 18)

Statement of Witness (name)

"I am the above named person and live at an address known to Police. On 1 December 2003 I made a statement of complaint to Police Alleging that I had been raped by Paul Stitt. I now wish to withdraw that complaint and I request no further police action in

relation to it. I make this statement of my own free will and thank Police for their time."

This girl made this retraction not because of me or any threat by republicans but because the police investigated and found that she was lying. I hold no ill will towards her. I understand that Mr X put pressure on this girl to go to the police. Cases like this happened over the next few months and I was more than able to prove them false as letters from both the police and PPS show:

"From PSNI, Dated 6th December, Mr Paul Stitt, Dear sir, in relation to the matter reported to this department, the PPS has now notified us on the basis of the facts and information available, the Director has directed 'No Prosecution' in this case."

"From PPS, dated 18th February, I am writing to notify you that the prosecution service has decided not to prosecute you in relation to an incident dated ??? for which papers were submitted to our offices by the police."

However, that didn't do me any good as the public perception engineered by my former friends and fuelled by the media had already ruined my life and character thus leaving me in the wilderness with people assuming the worst of me. The fact that all these false allegation were never highlighted by the media just added more

misery to my life. It was clear that people were only hearing that allegations were being made against me and nothing else.

Appearing in court for the first time on the 8th October 2003 was a massive change from appearing in court back in February 1994 when charged with republican political offences. Although being in the dock felt the same, the difference was massive. From people cheering for me to then screaming abuse at me was extraordinary. I felt like a fox being chased by crazy huntsmen and bloodhounds, each one wanting to be first to get to catch me.

Deliberate Time Delay

I have spent two and a half years waiting on the legal system to take its course. I believe that this long duration was somewhat deliberate. I have to stress that again to my amazement it was not the police who delayed the proceedings. They did their job well and did it speedily. They proved to me they had no axe to grind and were not interested in having me convicted just because I was a republican, and a well known one at that. The cops if anything were only interested in the law. As far as I am concerned they only did their duty. They had too many opportunities to kick my door down and arrest me for these charges and turn it into a real show.

No, the fault of the time delay lies solely and squarely with the DPP now the PPS (public prosecution service). In my view my case wasn't about me. It was more about convicting a leading republican on sexual charges. They deliberately delayed the case time

after time, month after month. It took them almost fifteen months just to put their case together and that consisted of three statements made by the three complainants. These were the same three statements that they had gotten back on the 16th September 2003. This was their case against me, no more or no less, yet they left me waiting all that time.

We had to make many appeals to the courts in order to have disclosure presented to us. We tried also to make the PPS see the futility of maintaining the charges against me. A defence document drawn up and submitted was as follows:

R – V- Paul Stitt

Pursuant to section 5 of the Criminal Procedure and **Investigations Act 1996**

Defence Statement

Dated 7th January 2005

1. The Defendant denies and states that he is not guilty of the charges alleged against him.
2. The Defendant denies that the prosecution will be able to prove any or all the essential elements of the offences alleged.

3. The Defendant takes issue with the matters necessarily underpinning the said charges and each of them on the basis that he denies that they occurred as alleged or at all.
4. In addition, the Defendant challenges the reliability, validity, quality and admissibility of the interviews that were carried out.
5. Furthermore, the Defendant will rely upon all such facts or admissible opinions as are within the knowledge of the prosecution, its servants or agents and such witnesses as may be called by the prosecution in this case but which are not within the knowledge of the Defendant and he will further rely upon all such facts and admissible opinions as may be given in evidence.
6. Finally, the evidence of all Crown witnesses which tends to suggest that the Defendant did commit the offence alleged against him is to be challenged. In particular and without the loss of generality, the reliability and consistency of witnesses who suggest that the Defendant was culpably involved in the offences alleged against him will be challenged.

To prepare for my trial we also needed gaol records from the Kesh etc., My legal team applied on numerous occasions to the Prison Service directly to ensure that we had the evidence needed for court. The answer most of the time was that they weren't available and

might have been destroyed as the gaol had closed down. However, I had learnt from talking to a former gaol guard; that the records were not destroyed and he had even told me where they were being kept. Again, my legal team applied to the courts. The following was in response to taking court measures to disclose the material which we needed:

In the Crown Court for the Division of Belfast in the matter of the Crown V Paul Stitt. Bill No: 559/04.

Summons to Witness under Section 51a of the Judicature (NI) Act 1978 to produce Third Party Material.

To Mr Pat ?????

Deputy of Director of Operations

Northern Ireland Prison Service

Dundonald House, Stormont Estate, Upper Newtownards Road

"You are hereby summonsed to appear and to produce to the chief clerk at Belfast Crown Court office Laganside Courts, 45 Oxford Street, Belfast, all of the documents specified hereunder on or before the 18th day of march 2005 at 9.45am."

The specified documents are:-

1. Warrants of detention or information regarding specific dates for periods of detention of Mr Stitt at HMP Crumlin Road and HMP Maze.
2. Dates of all periods of parole for Mr Stitt during his periods of detention at HMP Maze.
3. Details of all visits made to Mr Stitt during his period of detention at HMP Maze by Mr B.
4. Details regarding the protocol of visits to HMP Maze, specifically in relation to the following:-
 - (a) Booking procedures.
 - (b) Seating arrangements during visits.
 - (c) Monitoring of visits.
5. Plans of visiting areas at HMP Maze to include seating arrangements.
6. Any intelligence information arising out of visits made to Mr Stitt by Mr B.
7. All medical notes and records relating to Mr Stitt during his detention at HMP Crumlin Road and HMP Maze.

This was dated the 11th March 2005. It also included a note with a warning:

(Any person who without just excuse disobeys a Witness Summons requiring them to attend before the Crown Court is guilty of contempt of that court and is liable to a term of imprisonment and/or fine).

Needless to say after this the gaol tried to supply us with all the information they could gather as well as providing a witness from the gaol to appear in court if need be. However all this didn't come until two years after I was first charged following the accusations and came after many previous attempts to gain the disclosure.

More proof of this deliberate delay also came when I was assaulted with a baseball bat on the Saintfield Road on the 31st of August 2004. A man jumped out of a car as I was standing waiting to cross the road, he swung the bat two or three times and hit me twice. He then ran back into the road and bounced in the car. I reported this attack to police and it confirmed my assessment of the PPS and their thrust for a conviction on me. The police arrested my attacker three weeks later. They interviewed him, released him and sent a file to the PPS. It wasn't more than nine weeks later that the police informed me that no action would be taken against my attacker. The PPS sent a letter to my solicitor in confirmation of this decision:

Dated 22nd March 2005:

"Dear Sirs, Your letter of 11th March 2005 refers, please find enclosed herewith copy statement of complaint made by your client and summary of interview with his assailant. The department has directed no prosecution in relation to this matter."

I had already heard unofficially that no prosecution would be lodged against my attacker so I informed the Police Ombudsman of the incident as I was looking to find out why this was the case. A communication from the Police Ombudsman to me dated 11th March 2005, stated that:

"I refer to previous correspondence of 7 February 2005. The Police Ombudsman's office is now in receipt of relevant documentation from police and I will contact you again once this has been considered."

At least now I knew that the Ombudsman's office was looking into this matter and that I would be told what was actually happening. I had to wait another few weeks for communication from the Ombudsman's office:

Dated 30 March 2005 stated that:

"I refer to previous correspondence in relation to your complaint regarding the above. The Police Ombudsman's office has now received and reviewed relevant documentation from police in respect of this matter. It is noted that no independent witnesses came forward to police in respect of the assault, and the incident was not captured on CCTV. The police investigation into the incident resulted in a recommendation to prosecute the alleged assailant, based on your evidence and associated medical evidence. It was the PPS who directed no prosecution. This office has no remit over the PPS."

This made it clear to me that the PPS was intent in deliberately delaying my case and yet they could make a decision in a matter of weeks when it concerned me being assaulted. Unsurprisingly, they again went against the request of the police who asked for my assailant to be prosecuted. The PPS rejected this request just as they had also rejected police recommendations not to prosecute me in relation to charges against me by the complainants. This clearly showed not only was their vindictive, attempted prosecution of me going at a snails pace but it was political in nature and grandstanding at the highest level. On many occasions my legal team applied to the courts to end the delay. I wasn't afraid of court embarrassed "yes" but afraid "no" I wanted to go to trial as quickly as possible.

The aim of the PPS was twofold. The first to grind me down with the hope that I would get fed up and plead guilty to all the charges and the second to convict a republican. Judge after Judge slated the PPS calling on them to hurry up and get their act together but they continued to delay. A different excuse was used by them each time to various judges. One Resident Magistrate Judge, Joe Rice refused to give the PPS a normal 4 week delay, stating that:

"I am adjourning this case until November 3rd and Mr. Stitt is excused from attending on that date, there was a time for expedition and that time had been reached."

The PPS were looking to delay it until November 17th as a prosecution lawyer said the PPS had not reached a decision yet. However the 3rd came and went and the PPS got another extension of two weeks until the 17th when another Resident Magistrate cleared the public gallery. Judge Mark Hamil stated:

"when Paul Stitt appeared in the dock on previous occasions there had been public gallery disturbances. When it comes to the trial people who wish to observe will have to learn how to behave in court."

That finished the remand hearings and a date was soon to be fixed for trial court. One instance arose to give an indication that the PPS was in my favour. It occurred around seven months after I was charged. A PPS member contacted my solicitor and implied that they were going to drop all the charges against me but this would be dependant on the outcome of a meeting with a local PPS officer and his superiors. We learnt that that meeting took place and it was directed that in no way should the charges be dropped against me and that I should be brought to trial.

It's certainly my belief that the PPS was motivated only by political opportunity and not at all interested in justice. Their aim was as I said earlier to get a republican convicted with sexual assaults. This was more to embarrass republicans and nothing else. The PPS went against police recommendations not to prosecute and even more, against their own guidelines on when not to prosecute people in these

situations. It was said at my trial by the PPS that they were unaware of their own guidelines. When directed by the Judge Tom Burgess to go look at them, they came back and offered to drop around half the charges. This was rejected by both myself and my legal team. I had gone this far and I was not going to let them escape or get off easy. I would face all the charges as I believed I could prove them all false. This was a more difficult way for me but one I wanted to channel.

Chapter 12:

My Mother's Death

It has been a really hard time for me, waiting patiently on the legal proceedings to take their course. But this has also had a huge effect on my family and friends. It turned my friends and some family members against me. Although now, they have turned back to me again as the realization of the maliciousness of the allegations came to light.

My mum always believed me from day one but thought that I would be jailed just because of my background and the number of witnesses against me. I know this severely damaged her heart. It was too much for her to sit by and watch people make these allegations, especially people whom she would have known and who had walked past her in the street everyday and said hello to her.

She was a very quiet woman in the Carrick Hill area and really only bothered with a few of her close neighbours. She loved the horses and the bookies and would have had a wee bet almost every day. It was her only vice. Not much, considering that she had raised and brought up ten children and countless grandchildren. I know it broke her heart when these allegations were made against me and she never recovered from it. She was a wonderful and kind hearted soul and would have given me her last penny. When I was arrested back in 1994 for political offences she always appeared at the court whenever

I was up. While I was on remand she visited me without fail every single week. She also went up to the shop and bought me bags of biscuits two or three times a week and would walk up to the gaol and leave them in, as she knew I loved chocolate. On the day I eventually got sentenced to the twenty-two years she was at the court and collapsed outside the door of the court room. She was attended to by a female police officer and I will never forget that day.

I then moved to the gaol camp at Long Kesh where again she would make weekly visits, sometimes twice weekly if I needed anything. She continued this until my release in July 2000. While I was in gaol she opened her door to the republican movement and her house was their house and was used for many, many years. She only did this because of me as she had not a political bone in her body. Each year she would have made tea, coffee, food and offered shelter to many dozens of men and women that were patrolling the area around the 12th July fortnight. Again, she did this without question but due to devotion to her son. So many times she had did things for me, putting herself at risk and again without question. I owe her an awful lot and never got to truly thank her for everything she had done for me.

After September 2003 when these allegations were made and I had to leave the area and go to live in the hostel, she again came to visit me. She wasn't bothered if anyone knew she was visiting me and sadly for this, she and the rest of the family suffered. Thugs in Carrick Hill attacked her house several times destroying it with paint and at times attacked my family members. Their plight went unnoticed by

the wider community and those that did know and offered condolences but were too frightened to speak out and say anything. The people that should have done something were nowhere to be seen. The people that used her house for many years should hang their heads in shame. It was me the allegations were made against and not my family and certainly not my mother.

On the 18th April 2005 I got a call from my sister saying that my mum had been rushed into the Mater Hospital. My family was unsure of exactly what had happened to her as the doctors could not give a definite answer. I kept in contact with my sister and then in the afternoon she rang me and said that my mum was being transferred to intensive care in the city hospital. Things were still unclear but we knew it was very serious. I decided to go over to the hospital and one of my dear friends from the hostel drove me over and stayed with me a while. When she left I stayed with the rest of my family. Lots of my relations were at the hospital my mother's sisters, brother and lots of her nieces, and some of her neighbours. The news from the doctors was very bad. They stated that she was on a life support machine and could not breathe by herself. They stated that they would monitor the progress to see if she would be able to breathe by herself later on. As the night progressed the pattern started to change, it seemed my mum was attempting to breathe on her own but this was short and sporadic. As midnight approached the doctors said that it didn't look good and that all her family should be here for the next day. Though again, they said that it may be possible for progress during the night. My sister Joanne was in America and wasn't able to get home for the following

day. After midnight most of my relatives had gone home and it only left myself, my brother, father, and sisters and some nephews. We then decided that more of us should go home and just leave a few to stay over night as the rest of them would need to go home and sort kids out etc,. So, myself, my cousin Sharon and sisters: Angie, Linda, Martine and Eileen would stay and the rest would come back in the morning. We sat in the room provided by the hospital and took turns going in and out all night. It was about 3 am when one of the nurses told us my mum had shown signs of progress but that it was faint. This gave us hope for the next day. I spent most of the night in and out of the intensive care room. The next morning I left around 8 o'clock and went back to the hostel. I still had some hope that she would pull through as it seemed so unreal that she was even in the hospital. A couple of hours after I left the city hospital my sister phoned me and said that I should come back over right-a-way as the doctors had made their minds up and were turning the machine off in a few hours. That was it, I now knew for sure she wasn't going to make it, so I got washed, changed and went back to the hospital.

When I got back most of my family were there along with relatives and some friends. The doctors advised us all to go in and say our goodbyes, a few at a time. We did this and then the local hospital Chaplin came in and arranged for everyone to gather around her bed and say a few prayers and pray for her soul. Having gathered around and said the final prayers and goodbyes we went back outside to the waiting area. Everyone was devastated and lost. My sisters were very deeply lost as was my father. He was inconsolable. The doctors said

that they would turn the machine off in the next 15 minutes. They refused to keep it on until my sister Joanne could return from America later that evening.

The time came to switch of the life support machine and the doctors said that we should wait outside after a final goodbye. I told the doctors that I would remain in the ward as they switched the machine off. They said that it might be unpleasant for me however I was going to stay and that was that. They agreed and switched off the machine. I was alone with my mum as they drew the curtains. I held her hand and said several prayers for her. The colour started to fade from her and her body started to go cold. It took between ten and twenty minutes after the machine went off before she died. The doctors said she would feel no pain as she passed away. I don't know though if that's true. My mum made several jerk movements at the final minute before she passed. I told the doctors this, and their response was that "this was normal" and it's this reason they advise people not to be there when the machine is switched off.

I'm glad I was able to hold her hand and pray with her as she left this world and prepared for the next. It was then around twenty minutes later that another two doctors came along and certified her death. We had to arrange for her remains to be collected by undertakers and make funeral arrangements. It was decided that she was to be cremated as this had been her wish. She was brought home later that evening to Carrick Hill where she lay in wake until the funeral mass and cremation service. In a way her sudden death was certainly premature. She had always said to me in the past that she never ever

wanted to be put into a nursing home if she ever became unwell. As much as my father and family miss her, I am glad that her wish was answered.

My trouble and heartache only began at that point. It was then time for me to make a decision whether or not to go to the wake and funeral from Carrick Hill to St Patrick's Chapel. My whole family wanted me to go down to the house and attend the funeral service. I talked this over with all my family and about how those thugs might react at seeing me. Even if nothing was said or done the possibility was there for them to do so. They showed no respect when she was alive and I wanted to avoid the slightest upset during her final days on earth.

I didn't want to add any more hurt to my family and especially my sisters as they were devastated enough at the loss of our mum. I didn't want a single incident to occur at the funeral or mass in St Patrick's. I decided not to attend the funeral and service at Carrick Hill and St Patrick's but I would attend the cremation service in Roselawn cemetery instead. It was hard for me not to attend the funeral service but I wanted my mum's funeral to be held with dignity as she so rightly deserved. I did make an appearance at her wake, although it was in the early hours of the morning. I was also with her in hospital as she passed away and was able to attend the cremation service at Roselawn. I felt in the circumstances that this was as good as I could get. It was my understanding that Gerry Kelly of Sinn Fein passed a message through a family friend that I should attend the funeral no matter what. It was also my understanding that he arranged

for several dozen republicans to attend the funeral service in case I was to attend and thus help prevent any incidents occurring. I appreciate this very much and am grateful for the humanity shown. I'm also grateful for Gerry Kelly and Danny Lavery, Sinn Fein councilor and many other republicans for attending the funeral in person. My mother's funeral was extremely well attended and I wish to thank all those people who paid their respect to her.

Chapter 13:

The Sex Trial

For nearly two years I had been on bail without any conditions. During that time I was outcast, beaten and had received multiple threats. However, just a few months before my trial was to take place during the final court appearance before my actual trial the witnesses through the prosecution tried unsuccessfully to have my bail revoked. The reason being that Mr B had told the prosecution and medical practitioners, that republicans had given him several punishment beatings on my behalf in order to force him to drop the charges.

As a result of this the court amended the bail form as follows:

Whereas the defendant stands charged as set out in the statement of complaint. The undersigned Paul Gerard Stitt of 61a Scotch Quarters, Carrick Hill, Belfast the principal party to this recognizance, hereby undertakes to perform the following obligations, viz: to attend the Crown Court sitting at a venue to be fixed on a date to be fixed, and there to surrender to the Prison Governor and to be tried for the said offences and not to depart the court without leave, and so from court to court to which the trial may be adjourned until this recognizance shall be discharged by the court.

Subject to the following conditions, namely: **Defendant**

No contact with injured parties or witnesses or anybody connected with the case.

The said principal party acknowledging to be bound to forfeit to the Crown the principal party the sum of 400.00 pounds in case the said principal party fails to perform the above obligation.

So, in reality the prosecution were able to include one condition on my recognizance. This was to ensure that I had not to go near the complainants. This was a further attempt by the witnesses, and in particular Mr B, to give an impression of a poor tortured soul, as if he had and still was being abused by me. This was just another one of his lies and indeed I am sure the republican movement in Carrick Hill and the New Lodge know that they never carried out any punishment beating on my behalf.

My trial eventually came on the 15th of June 2005 less than two months after the death of my mum. It was a very difficult time for me with having just lost my mum and also losing another person in my life at the same time. I knew I was going to be alone each day in court and that it was going to be very embarrassing for me as well. I was committed to seeing it through, embarrassing or not.

The first thing to happen before a trial actually starts is that a jury is selected that will judge you throughout. The jury then make its decision at the end of all the prosecution and the defence evidence.

The jury selection usually takes place in the court room from a pool of jurors given by the courts.

However an hour before my legal team were to enter the jury selection, the prosecution, through my barrister, offered me a deal. I could have most of the charges dropped and would receive a short gaol term. I wasn't interested in deals and I told my barrister "no thanks." Having relayed this message to the prosecution, they again offered me an even lesser sentence and one which would maybe be suspended. I again told my barrister that I wasn't interested in any deal, that I had waited this long for the trial and I would be going ahead with it. A third deal was then offered to me, this time by my solicitor. He said that, the prosecution wanted to keep this really low key and that it could all be over very quickly. I would be guaranteed a non-custodial sentence and if I pleaded guilty to one charge per person. All the others would be dropped and the Long Kesh charges would not be mentioned. I must stress that my solicitor was only doing his duty in relaying this deal to me. My answer was that again I was not interested in any deals and that was it. I told them I would rather spend one hundred years in gaol than plead guilty to something that I am completely innocent of. I have made many mistakes in my life and I was certainly not going to make the biggest one now.

With the deals out of the way my defence team, which consisted of Andrew Russell from Madden & Finucane solicitors, Patrick Little QC, Andrew Moriarty BL, held a pre jury selection meeting with myself. I made known my concerns about the jury pool stating that I believed that there was a possibility of me not getting a

fair trial. My reason for this belief was based solely on my fears that most of the jury pool would be protestant. I was more concerned that if any of the jury that were to be selected were perhaps DUP supporters that their judgment may be clouded, not only for the fact of me being a republican but even the fact of being bi can influence some people. We talked about this for several minutes and decided to go ahead with the jury selection. I entered the court room along with my legal team and Judge Kevin Finnegan gave the court staff orders to call jurors in one at a time from a jurors room. Each would be either selected or rejected.

At a selection process the defence team have six challenges to reject jurors without any reason. However, the prosecution can reject as many jurors as they wish. In my view this is an imbalance in the legal system. The jury selection started and it was quite clear that the prosecution were not selecting jurors we believed to be catholic. It appeared to me that they were rejecting most Catholics that were called in by court staff. There is supposed to be no way of knowing what religion a juror is but in our society here in the North it is easily possible to guess by their address or even a name. There are exceptions obviously; mixed marriages occur and in more middle class and upper class areas this becomes more difficult to do. However, to me this distinction was what appeared to be happening during the selection.

Some of my legal team also thought this and I believe the judge was quite aware of what was happening as he gave my legal team an extra few challenges above their quota. At the end, the jury

was selected and they were given a talk by the judge and then all sent home for the day with an order to appear at court on the following Monday for the start of the trial proper.

The first day of the trial came. I arrived at court via my normal transport organised by Madden & Finucane. However, this time unlike all the other court appearances I had made, I went through the front doors of the court house. I arrived at the room next door to the courtroom where I would have all my legal meetings and wait on the days events to take their course when not actually in the courtroom. My solicitor asked if I had any concerns. I said that I was still unsure of the jury make up and whether it could have an effect on the outcome of the case. However, at the end the decision was made not to challenge the jury as this would delay the case even more. So we went ahead.

Mr A, Mr B, and Mr C were in the gallery. They had only a few supporters along with them. The judge had been sitting at his bench writing some notes. The prosecution asked the judge would it be possible for him to clear the court from reporters and everyone else when each of the witnesses were giving evidence against me. The judge refused this and thus they would have to give evidence in open court as I had to do. It's my belief that the three complainants didn't want anyone in the court when they were giving evidence as most of it was going to be lies. They knew if people heard what they were saying they would wonder why they were telling lies. Normally when they were in court they would have had a lot of supporters with them but, funnily enough, this time they had very few and even when the

three of them were giving evidence, the few supporters they did have were not even in the gallery.

My trial was open to anyone who wanted to go down and watch the proceedings from the public gallery. I only wish all those people that went to the court to shout abuse at me had been at the actual trial and they would have learnt that the people they were supporting were lying through their teeth and to have seen them being caught out.

The time was about 10.25am and the judge ordered the court staff to bring in the jury. They did this and then Judge Burgess gave the jury a brief outline of the case and asked them if they have any problems or if they knew anyone involved in the case. Several jurors approached the judge and were excused and then additional standby jurors were called in from the juror waiting room. It's not known why some were excused as that was between the judge and the juror. Having then settled the new jurors in place the judge then proceeded to inform them of their role and the guidelines on the law that they were to follow.

Judge Burgess finished his direction to the jury by stating that;

The defendant is charged with offences which were alleged to have happened in the Maze Prison. He made the jury aware that the defendant was in prison for a time. He warned them that they were not at all to speculate on the reason for this man being in prison. All they needed to know was it had nothing to do with the charges he currently faced.

He then asked the jury did they understand, to which they all replied "yes." The judge had also instructed the prosecution to make sure that the three witnesses did not alledge anything about me in open court concerning my politics.

Having got all the formalities out of the way, the trial was then officially started. The prosecution opens a trial here. They did this by telling the jury that I was a serial sex beast and that I abused the three men that were about to give evidence against me. They made many allegations but they had to try and stick to the statements that the three witnesses originally gave to the police as this was the evidence against me. For around fifteen minutes they gave a lecture to the jurors telling them how I was a monster and how I ruined the lives of the poor witnesses. They then told the jury that they would prove beyond any reasonable doubt that I was guilty of all the charges I faced and that it was then up to the jury to find me guilty.

They then started with the first witness, Mr A. He was in the witness stand for around twenty-five minutes as the prosecution tried to ask him leading questions. This is not allowed and the judge made them aware of that and they apologised. Mr A then finished giving his evidence against me for the prosecution. It was now the time for my Barrister, Paddy Little QC, to cross-examine Mr A. Paddy proceeded to question him on the evidence he gave just minutes beforehand and put lots of questions and factual evidence to him. Firstly Mr A claimed that he had been friends with me from the age of twelve to sixteen. He then claimed that when he turned sixteen that he

disassociated himself with me and had no further contact. Throughout the cross-examination of Mr A he was caught telling falsehoods and was full of contradictions. Many of his answers were given as 'I don't know' or 'I can't remember.' He was soon forced to admit to certain statements from Paddy as we had factual evidence to back them up. Among these, the fact that I had been in America during most of the time Mr A claimed we had been friends and it was shown in court that Mr A and myself had actually been friends with at a later stage. Evidence was produced and Mr A admitted that he gone with me and had stayed with me in America on a number of occasions when he was aged between sixteen and twenty one. He also admitted that while he denied being bi / homosexual he had been attracted to me. At the end he was allowed to step down from the witness box. His evidence was very, very poor. He was challenged on all of it and forced to contradict himself throughout, many times.

Then it was the turn of Mr B to get up and give evidence against me. Again the prosecution asked him questions and again they attempted to try and lead him and were again told they were not to by the judge. It was seen in the "face" of the prosecution that they were not getting the answers they wanted to "hear" from the witnesses. It appeared as if the prosecution were doing badly and so they finished with "no more questions Your Honour." Once again it was Paddy's turn to cross-examine the second prosecution witness, Mr B. Again Paddy was extremely good and armed with a mountain of factual material evidence against this witness which Mr B obviously hadn't realised was possible. Mr B alleged that he went to the gaol in Long

Kesh to visit me fifty to sixty times and that I abused him on each occasion. People that had listened to the news and had read newspapers about me would have believed that I was charged with just one indecent assault on this witness in Long Kesh.

No, the real charge against me was that this person was abused fifty to sixty times, not "once" like the media reported. When Paddy hit this witness with gaol records of visits etc, he was completely shocked and didn't know which way to look but because of his statement to police that I abused him fifty to sixty times in gaol alone he had to stick to his original statement of evidence. He could not face the truth and state he lied. The visit records and evidence from the gaol authorities proved his statement could not be true. My legal team even had a prison governor ready and willing to appear as a witness for us. The prosecution conceded these facts and it was not necessary for the governor to take the stand. So it was incontrovertible the evidence against him but he wouldn't admit he had lied. *how could he? what would he tell his friends and supporters?* His face was white and sweat ran off him. This witness, Mr B, again in his statement to police insisted that only a few months before I went to gaol and right until I actually went into gaol, I abused him in a flat that I had. He swore by this statement and had tried to gain some credibility back after the first fiasco. My barrister gave him several chances to answer the question differently. "Are you positive about that?" he had asked him several times, to which Mr B replied "yes." Paddy then told him that I didn't have a flat before I went to gaol, that it was given up long before I went to gaol. Mr B stated that I was

lying. Paddy told Mr B that we had documented proof that I didn't have the flat when he stated I did. Mr B then tried to change his story; stating instead that a sister of mine had the flat in question. Paddy told him that wasn't true either. Mr B again insisted that it was true and would not back down. Paddy then told Mr B that we had a witness outside the court room from the Housing Association who was ready to go in and testify against him. At that point the prosecution got up and asked the judge for a minute.

The outcome was that the prosecution agreed that I did not have the flat when Mr B stated. It was given up at least a year before I went to gaol. The prosecution accepted the documented evidence from the Housing Association and therefore the witness from the Housing Association who had been waiting outside the courtroom did not have to take the witness stand. The prosecution were embarrassed by this. It also completely rattled Mr B. He didn't know where to turn. My barrister continued with his cross-examination and continued to prove the accusations false time and time again.

Mr B also stated to police; that between 1998-2000 while I was out on some parole I would have taken him to my mother's flat and again abused him (even though he would have been nineteen or twenty at this time). He gave that statement to police trying to show that I had abused him over some years. Once again, in documented evidence produced by the Housing Executive, this proved to be an impossibility. Even Mr Y would have known this could not have been true but the opportunity to outcast me was much too appealing for him.

In a communication from the Housing Executive they confirmed this was impossible:

Re Stitt, formerly Unity Walk Belfast

Your letter of 8th inst; refers regarding the above. We would comment as follows in relation to the issues you have raised:

- ❖ The tenancy at Unity Walk Belfast was held in the name of Joseph Stitt. It was terminated 1st May 1994.
- ❖ You will appreciate that as it was some time ago, we can only give an indication when this property was demolished. Our records would indicate that the dwelling was demolished on or around 8th October 1995.
- ❖ We would not have plans of the layout of this property, and it would be our belief that such copies would no longer exist.

I trust that you will find this information beneficial, and I hope it has gone some way to addressing the issues you have raised.

Housing Executive

This was another one of Mr B's allegations shredded to pieces. Some of these points were so obvious and unbelievable even to both Mr X and Y, the two main organisers of the hate campaign against me, that "*they couldn't see the forest for the trees.*"

It was now my opinion that the case had been going really well for me. The first two witnesses proved to be completely inconsistent and were caught telling falsehoods. It was also quite clear that the prosecution had badly managed the case. In my opinion the prosecution looked as if they had already lost the case.

When the third witness, Mr C, got up the prosecution started asking questions yet once again trying to lead him with one huge question. He asked "why did you not report this abuse earlier" to which the witness replied "I was afraid of him as he was a top republican paramilitary." Immediately Judge Burgess stopped the trial and sent the jury out to the jurors' room. He told the prosecution off for allowing their witness to make such an allegation against me in open court in front of the jury when he had already stated this was not relevant to the trial.

Judge Burgess and my legal team debated in the court room about how to proceed with my case. It was now very clear that the jury would have been contaminated given the allegation just made against me and could now be biased against me. I had been afraid of this from the beginning that such information would influence the minds of the jurors especially if any were DUP supporters. Judge Burgess sent my legal team out of the court room along with myself to discuss what I wanted to do.

I had two options open to me. The first was to stop the trial completely and seek a retrial with a new judge and new jury. This would have meant delaying the whole thing again for months and months and this was something that I wanted to avoid. The second

option was that we go ahead with the trial and that Judge Burgess would give a very strong warning to the jury to completely disregard the allegation made against me.

It was a very hard decision for me to make. However, the possibility occurred in my opinion that it might be the case where the PPS knew the trial was not going in their favour and that they may have deliberately thrown this spanner in the works hoping that I would ask for a new trial. I considered the options deeply and at the end decided that I would go ahead with my trial. The judge called in the jury and made the strong warning to disregard the allegation made against me. He stated that there was absolutely no proof of this, none of the charges against where regarding this and that the PPS was in no way interested in bringing any charges against me concerning that allegation. He also gave the jury members the option of leaving the jury if they thought that they were unable to put the allegation out of their mind. The trial resumed again and Mr C was called back up to the stand by the prosecution. His evidence continued. It was very poor and repetitive and similar to that of Mr A and B the other two witnesses. Mr C flustered and panicked. The prosecution finished by having asked him many questions and then it was the turn for Paddy to cross-examine him and to challenge his statement.

Mr C gave a statement of evidence to police. However as Paddy asked him direct questions about that abuse he told a very different story from that which he gave to police. Mr C had given the police two versions of what he alleged happened. Unknown to him was that one of the stories he alleged was roughly written in police

notebooks. This is standard protocol for police. We had access to this material under the disclosure laws. Mr C was also caught lying on the stand. He stated that he had broken contact of with me at the age of sixteen and that he was glad when I went to gaol. However my legal team produced evidence showing that this was not the case, as he had gone to visit me in gaol several times. He tried to explain this by saying that he had been bored and "mitching school" at the time with nothing else to do and that it was his friend who told him to go to the gaol to visit me.

That was the end of his cross-examination for the time being. When the court took a five minute break I told my barrister that Mr C was lying as he had already left school by that time. This was proved to be the case. Paddy, my barrister, had him recalled to the witness box. Mr C was very confused and looked unsure as to why he had been called back. My barrister asked him what age he'd left school at, to which he replied "fifteen or sixteen." My barrister agreed and said "yes that would be right, however, when you went to visit Mr Stitt in gaol, you were around nineteen which meant that you had left school some years earlier," his reply was to shake his shoulders as he was obviously lost for words. This was Paddy's last question. All three of the witnesses who made statements of evidence to police against me had now finished in court.

In my opinion the witnesses were very bad as each of them had obviously lied. They had met together several times before going to police. They accepted in court that they were taken to the police by Mr X. They had all accepted in court that they had discussed with Mr

X what they would tell the police. They each said they had distanced themselves from me and had avoided me in the street. Indeed Mr C even stated that he only went out of his house if he was with someone as he was in fear of me. Again, evidence was given to the court contradicting this evidence and they were all forced to admit that they had not avoided me. It was even shown that Mr A had gone to America with me on two occasions for periods of six weeks at a time and indeed lived in the same house as me. This again was years after he claimed to have had no contact with me. Photographic and documented evidence was used by my defence team to counter the allegations made against me. Witnesses and documented evidence from the Prison Service, the Housing Association, Housing Executive, were used as part of my defence. There was no material evidence against me other than the three statements made by Mr A, B, and C. The prosecution had no other evidence at all against me. They could not back one single incident up with evidence.

After the three witnesses had given evidence it was the turn of the two police officers, who interviewed myself in Antrim Road police station back in September 2003, to take the stand. They were called by the prosecution to try and strengthen their against me. This was really only to be a formality for them to agree that I was the person they had arrested and charged at Antrim Road and for them to read out in court my statement. They both did this but then were asked several questions by my barrister. They told the court that I had appeared at the police station voluntarily, I had looked as if I was a defeated man, that I was the victim of media attacks and was under

threat from unnamed sources. They also confirmed that Mr X would have held a different political view point from myself.

It was Mr X who organised the hate campaign against me in Carrick Hill. He arranged for the newspapers to print malicious stories about me. Indeed, he even gave interviews to local papers adding his name to them along with Mr Y's, who also gave interviews to papers. These two men helped turn the people of Carrick Hill against me. And only because I had had disagreements with them locally on community issues and some political issues. They know what they did was wrong. They know they got it wrong and I hope someday they will acknowledge this.

My statement to police was a very confusing one. I did admit that I had sexual, mutual encounters with two of the witnesses but was unsure about dates and times. At the time of my interview I had not slept in over a week, I had eaten absolutely nothing and had lost several stone in weight. I was mentally and physically exhausted and was under threat to go to the police and admit everything that was being alleged against myself. I wrestled with my heart and mind. My mind was telling me to admit to anything as I had no choice as I was under threat. My heart however was saying "no don't admit anything just tell the truth." I had been totally confused throughout the interview but at the end of it I had said I did have some sexual mutual relationships but the times I wasn't sure of. I also stated this in court that I had had sexual, mutual relationships with Mr A and B.

It was only in court that I was able to give the approximate dates as I had been able to collect the evidence needed. I admitted and

stated in court that I had been bisexual at that time. I stated that I had nothing other than consensual sexual encounters with two of the three complainants. I was able to prove that the times the complainants were stating were false and indeed were at times that were physically impossible. I gave my evidence after the police gave theirs and then the prosecution made their closing argument. Paddy, my barrister, then made his closing argument. After this Judge Burgess gave his directions on the law to the jury and sent them out to deliberate.

After that I went down to the court holding room and lay down on the bench. I was relieved to see it all over. I was only down in the holding room about 45 minutes when a court staff knocked on the door and said "that's you up again." I said to him "that was quick," to which he replied "I don't think you have anything to worry about. I think it's over for you." He had been in court throughout the trial. As I went into the courtroom again Andrew my solicitor came over to me. I asked what had happened and he told me, nothing, as the judge had just called the jury back to tell them to take lunch. Again, I went down to the holding room to wait for the verdict. But by the end of that day the jury was still unable to make a decision on any of the charges. I left court and went home for the evening. The next morning the judge sent the jury out to deliberate again. The second day was also coming to an end and the jury still couldn't reach a verdict on any of the charges. Once again the court staff knocked on my door and told me they wanted me up in court. So I again went up into the courtroom.

The Verdict: Hung Jury

As I made my way up to the court room, I was saying to myself that it would be impossible for any jury to convict me, even if it wanted to, as my defence team had completely destroyed the prosecution case. We had produced important evidence to counter the witnesses' allegations and evidential statements. On top of that the witnesses were caught telling lies and found to be totally inconsistent in their evidence.

I glanced around the court room. The public gallery contained about two dozen people, the three complainants and a few supporters. Police, court staff and the court reporter also filled the room. The prosecution were in their usual places and my barristers and legal team were at theirs. As I was walking in to the dock, Andrew came over to me and told me that the jury wasn't able to make a decision one way or the other and that the judge was going to dismiss them and it would be a hung jury. Now I knew what was happening for definite. I sat down in the dock and waited for the judge to come in and call the jury back. As I was waiting, I took another few glances over my shoulder at the complainants and their supporters. I knew what the decision was but they did not. They looked at me as if they were pleased and as if they thought I was going to be convicted.

The judge came in and everyone stood up as normal. He then sat down and so did everyone else. His first words were to the public gallery warning them that when the jury came in and gave their verdict, whichever way it may be, that there was to be no shouting in

his court. He warned them that they would face a contempt of court charge and be arrested.

He then called on the court staff to go and bring the jury in again. The jury came in and I looked at them momentarily. Some glanced over to me and others just looked towards Judge Burgess. He then asked the jury if they had been able to reach a verdict on any of the charges. The jury foreperson stood up and explained that they had not. Judge Burgess then asked them if they thought that if they were given more time they could come to a verdict to which she replied again replied "no, Your Honour, the jury would not be able to agree a verdict." He asked if that was the same for all the charges and again the reply was yes they were unable and would be unable to reach a verdict.

Judge Burgess thanked the jury for their time and hard work. He then told them that he was dismissing them and that they would now no longer be needed. He instructed them to leave the court room and return to their normal life. Having dismissed the jury I was left feeling disappointed. I knew that I may have to go through the whole thing again and even worse could be looking at a delay of many months.

Before he left the court the judge said that I was free to go for now but that I would have to wait to see if the prosecution would seek a retrial. He directed the prosecution to go and reconsider their approach to this case and come back to the court and give its decision, sooner rather than later. It was my opinion that the judge was telling the prosecution not to be seeking a retrial in my case. I believe that

Judge Burgess knew I was innocent and that he was surprised by the jury not being able to reach a verdict. The judge left the court room and it was over. The complainants and their supporters weren't sure what had happened so they all waited outside the court room for the police and the prosecution to ask what was happening and if I had won.

For me, I did win, but only this round. I knew that the prosecution would seek a retrial as it was their policy all along to try and have me convicted. Plus, it just gave them an opportunity to prolong the outcome for a further period of time.

Seeking a retrial

At the end of my first trial I met with my legal team in the court room. We all agreed that the prosecution would likely attempt to seek a retrial. We decided to wait a few weeks to give the prosecution time to consider what the Judge Burgess had told them. We did this and after several months on the 30th August at the Crown Court the crown officially sought a retrial. I received word from Andrew that the prosecution was seeking a retrial but with only two of the complainants this time and not three as was the case in the original trial. The retrial was to take place on 28th November 2005. This was five months after the initial trial and the prosecution also ignored the direction of the judge when he stated he wanted it dealt with sooner rather than later.

It again was my strong belief that this was another attempt by the prosecution to try and manipulate the legal proceedings and to weaken my defence case. They had decided not to use Mr C in their case against me. Mr C had been caught lying and had to be recalled up to the witness box to explain why he lied under oath.

I met with Andrew and discussed my concerns about this retrial. I wanted to challenge these issues and concerns in court. I wanted to know why they were only going ahead with two complainants instead of three. Andrew contacted the PPS and asked why they were taking this course of action. After several correspondents between him and the PPS, the PPS was not able to produce any statement of withdrawal by Mr C and they could not even offer any rough notes about his unwillingness to attend the retrial.

It was now the case that they were only seeking a retrial with Mr A and Mr B. This would have been more difficult for me to prove that a conspiracy was evident in the case as all three had acted together in each step of the process. A decision was taken by my legal team to seek an Abuse of Process in court on the matter and the basis was that I would not be able to receive a fair trial. My barristers, Paddy and Andrew set to work and prepared the case for court on the Abuse of Process. This was done and was held on the 25th November 2005 several days before the retrial was to begin. The following chapter explains my case for the Abuse of Process that my legal team drew up for the court.

Chapter 14:

Abuse of Process

The abuse of process took place on the 25th November 2005. The judge that was to hear the case was to be Judge Burgess. Judge Burgess was my original trial judge and he was able more than any other judge to deal with the Abuse of Process. He would have been very familiar with all the facts of the case and was certainly aware of witnesses telling lies. Below is the actual case that my legal team used for its arguments at the hearing:

R-v-Paul Stitt, Abuse of Process, Skeleton Argument

(1) THE BACKGROUND

(i) The Defendant is a 34 year old man from Carrick Hill in Belfast. He faced 28 counts of indecent assault and gross indecency against Mr. A, Mr. B, Mr. C. these acts were alleged to have taken place between 1985 and 1996.

(ii) The trial commenced on 15 June 2005 and concluded on 24 June 2005. The court heard evidence from three complainants, namely Mr A, B and C. At the end of the trial there was a hung jury.

(iii) In interview the defendant had made certain admissions, however, his evidence at trial was that he was confused during the course of the interviews as his life was in danger and the very nature of the allegations was such that he was placed under a lot of stress and was not thinking properly at all. In addition, the defendant gave evidence that he had been coerced by unnamed persons before attending for interview to make admissions to the allegations. In fact, in and around the day before his arrest, he had been admitted to Knockbracken Health Care Park for psychiatric treatment. He had also been attending the Mater Hospital.

(iv) The thrust of the defence case was that Mr Stitt was the victim of a conspiracy against him, with all three complainants alleging that the activity occurred whenever they were under 17 years of age. The case was made that all three complainants had acted under the influence of Mr. X.

(2) THE RETRIAL

(v) A retrial in this case was formally sought by the Crown on 30 August 2005 at Belfast crown Court. The case has been re-listed for 28 November 2005.

(vi) Prior to formally seeking a retrial, the Crown indicated by letter of 11 August 2005 that the Crown did not intend to proceed against Paul

Stitt in respect of those charges in which Mr. C was the alleged injured party.

(vii) By letter of 25 August, the prosecution was asked by the defendant's solicitor to explain why the crown was taking this course of action. The Crown replied on 26 August stating that Mr C, had indicated to police after the initial trial that he did not wish to give evidence at any retrial proceedings.

(viii) On 13 September, the Crown was asked to provide the statement of withdrawal from Mr C on 21 September, the Crown indicated that no statement of withdrawal was made after the trial.

(ix) On 11 October, the Crown was asked to provide any note book entry relevant to Mr C's indication that he did not wish to proceed with his complaint along with any documentation relevant to the decision not to proceed by way of retrial in relation to the complaint made by Mr C.

(x) By letter of 14 October, the Crown replied that it did not feel any duty of disclosure arose in respect of the items requested and that there was nothing to add to their letters of 26 August and 21 September.

(xi) Copies of all correspondence are attached.

(3) APPLICATION TO STAY

(xii) It is submitted that it would be an abuse of process to allow this case to proceed to a retrial on the basis that the Defendant cannot receive a fair trial, and that accordingly, proceedings should be stayed immediately.

(xiii) The case of **R-v- Beckford (1996) 1 Cr App Rep 94** contains authoritative commentary on when an abuse of process application might be mounted:

"The jurisdiction to stay can be exercised in many different circumstances. Nevertheless two main strands can be detected in the authorities:

- (1) cases where the court concludes that the defendant cannot receive a fair trial;
- (2) cases where the court concludes that it would be unfair for the defendant to be tried".

The case of **R-v-B [2003] 2 Cr App Rep 13** (a case involving delay in making complaints about sexual abuse) also provides a useful enunciation of a seminal principle:

"At the heart of our criminal justice system is the principle that while it is important that justice is done to the prosecution and

justice is done to the victim, in the final analysis the fact remains that it is even more important that an injustice is not done to a defendant."

It is submitted that this principle should provide guidance as to whether a stay of proceedings should be granted in the circumstances of this case.

(xiv) As appears above, the prosecution have indicated to the defence that Mr. C, does not wish to give evidence and that accordingly, they will not be proceeding in respect of the charges were he is the complainant. One of the essential planks of the defence case was that there was collusion / conspiracy between the complainants and Mr. X in respect of the bringing these allegations against the defendant and even in the bringing of these allegations to police attention. Since Mr. C, will not be before the court either as a complainant or as a witness, the defendant's case is naturally and irredeemably prejudiced.

(a) See attached schedule for inconsistencies in respect of Mr. C's evidence which would damage his credibility as a witness / complainant and would also damage the credibility of the other two complainants since at all times, they were acting together in terms of making of complaints to the police and in meeting with Mr. X.

(b) the inconsistencies in the evidence of Mr. C supplemented the substantial inconsistencies in the evidence of the other two

complainants. The overall gross inconsistencies in all three complainants' evidence were a very powerful argument on the part of the defence. This was particularly in the context of a jury having to be satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt of the truth of the evidence of each of the three complainants.

(c) Since Mr C will not be giving evidence in this case, the defence is placed in an impossible position. If Mr C's evidence is not before the jury on retrial, the inconsistencies in that evidence will not be brought to the attention of the jury, thereby weakening the case that the defence had made at previous hearing. Alternatively, should the defence raise in front of the jury the allegations made at previous trial by Mr C, by way of cross-examination of the other two complainants, the defence will be raising such matters in prejudicial circumstances as the defence will not have the opportunity to cross-examine Mr C.

(xv) In the circumstances of this case, where the defence alleged a conspiracy against the defendant, the defence case is necessarily weakened by the fact that the crown are not proceeding in respect of complaints made by Mr C. It is submitted that there is clear prejudice to the Defendant in the conduct of his defence by virtue of this fact with the result that a fair trial is no longer possible for the reasons given above. Whilst a stay should only be employed in exceptional circumstances (Attorney General's Reference (No 1 of 1990) (1992) 95 Cr App rep 296), it is submitted that in this case it can be

demonstrated on behalf of the Defendant, on the balance of probabilities, that a fair trial is no longer possible.

(xvi) In the alternative, and / or in addition, it is submitted that a fair trial is no longer possible because of the delay that has occurred in this case between the acts of abuse that were alleged to have happened and the complaints being made.

(a) Because of the passage of time between incidents alleged and the complaint being made, it has resulted in evidence which might have assisted the Defendant being no longer available – records of prison visits that were relevant to the frequency with which Mr B says that he visited the Defendant in prison and which would have also been relevant to whether or not Mr C had continued to visit after the six month period for which records remain;

(b) Recollections of events are blurred by the considerable passage of time and the Defendant is necessarily deprived of the same opportunity of gainsaying these complaints (either personally or through the testimony of other individuals) with the same precision as he would if these complaints had been made at the time or a shorter period of time after they allegedly happened. It is notable that the defendant's mother, who would have been able to give evidence about living arrangements in the house, is now deceased.

The court is referred to the case **R-v- B** cited above. It was accepted in that case because of the delay the Defendant had been "put in an impossible position to defend himself. He was not able to conduct any proper cross-examination of the complainant. There was no material he could put to the complainant to suggest that she had said something had happened on one occasion which could be established to be incorrect." It is respectfully submitted that the defendant in this case finds himself in an analogous situation.

(xvii) Further and in the alternative, it is submitted that the correct test in the circumstances of this case (where there has been delay on the part of the alleged victims in making their complaints) is whether or not a fair trial would still be possible and not whether the delay was justified. The nature of the Defendant's defence is such that in exploring the reasons for the delay (and of course the issues of a conspiracy) at the retrial he would be compelled to adduce in evidence the allegations from Mr C that are now not being proceeded with. It is submitted that as a result, the fairness of the retrial will be so seriously eroded in the circumstances that proceedings should be stayed. See **R-v-J.A.K. [1992] Crim L. R. 30.**

(xviii) Finally, see generally the observations of the House of Lords in the case of **R-v-Smolinski [2004] 2 Cr. App. Rep. 40.**

SCHEDULE

1. the evidence at the trial showed that all three complainants were friends and that all three were at adverse comment within their area if it emerged that they had consensual sex with the Defendant.
2. issues emerged that all three complainants may have been homosexual/bisexual and that sexual activity between the three complainants and the Defendant was voluntary/consensual.
3. Mr C gave evidence to the effect that by the age of 16 he was distancing himself from the Defendant. He also said that he was glad when the Defendant went to prison and felt filthy, dirty and ashamed, yet, the available prison records of visits revealed that he had gone to see the Defendant on two occasions when he was 18. the missing prison records may have revealed a greater number of visits.
4. Mr C was also caught lying before the jury as regards the circumstances under which he went to see the Defendant in prison. He said that he decided to go to visit the Defendant whilst skiving of school. At this time, he would not have been at school. In addition, the allegedly impromptu nature of the visit would have been at odds with standard booking procedures for visits. It was established in evidence that
5. prison visits had to be arranged days if not weeks in advance and with the agreement of the defendant.

6. the quality of the evidence given by Mr C was poor and was replete with many instances where he said "I don't know" or "I can't remember".
7. Mr C's evidence allowed the jury to see that he had a normal relationship with the Defendant long after he claimed to have distanced himself from him, with instances of meeting through football, other social occasions and helping to paint.
8. rough notes made by investigating police in respect of Mr C's complaint revealed that he alleged that the abuse happened a few times after the incident in the car, where he slept in the defendant's car. This was at odds with his statement of evidence and oral evidence at trial where Mr C said the last incident was the "car incident".
9. Mr B and Mr C both admitted they were "best friends", with Mr C saying that he had been a life long friend of Mr A and Mr B, thus providing the opportunity for collusion and conspiracy.
10. there were inconsistencies and vagueness in the evidence of the three complainants as to how they came together to report the matter to police and as to how, physically, they were brought to the station to be interviewed.
11. all three complainants were unable to explain the involvement of Mr X in the making of these complaints.
12. all three complainants gave details to Mr X because of Mr X's position of influence in the local community.

The Abuse of Process arguments were put together by both of my barristers:

Patrick Lyttle QC
Andrew Moriarty BL
Bar Library
22 November 2005

Chapter 15:

Judgment: The Endgame

It was now four months since the Abuse of Process case was taken back in November 05. In March 06 Andrew phoned me up and told me that the decision was to be heard later on in the week at the Crown court. It now appeared that the judge had taken his time with the case and had given it a lengthy consideration. He appeared to be finished with his deliberation and was set to give his final judgment on the stay of proceedings.

The morning of the judgment came and Andrew informed me that I did not have to attend the court in person. I wasn't sure if I wanted to go down or not. I decided not to go down and Andrew assured me he would contact me by phone as soon as Judge Burgess had delivered his judgment. The case was to be heard at 9.30am and shouldn't have taken more than forty-five minutes to complete. The wait for the hearing was a long and hard one. I was very anxious and had not slept the whole night before. I was milling about the house from around 6am and the wait seemed like it was never going to end.

The clock appeared to be ticking very slowly and 10am seemed an eternity away. I managed to get through that ordeal and

just after 10am my phone rang. I saw Andrew's name appear on the screen and I answered it immediately. He said "I have good news and bad news" to which I replied "what the fuck do ya mean?" He told me that the good news was the Judge had stayed proceedings meaning that it was the end. I thought to myself then, what could be the bad news? He said that although Judge Burgess had ended it all, the judge informed my defence team that under new legislation the prosecution has the right to appeal the decision the judge had made and had Fourteen days. However, Andrew tried to reassure me that this was merely a formality and that I would only have to wait another two weeks to officially see it all at an end. I asked Andrew what was the possibility of the PPS trying to appeal. He told me he didn't believe they would as the judge has made a very strong judgment against a retrial and that he had also pointed to the fact that the witnesses were unreliable. We talked for a few minutes on the phone and I tried to tell myself that two more weeks after already waiting all this time (two and a half years), wouldn't kill me. A date was set for 14 days later and the Judge would then call in the prosecution and ask for their decision.

The following is the judgment delivered by Judge Burgess. It is suggested that it has been one of the strongest judgments given out in a court room here for many years:

R -v- PAUL GERARD STIIT

BACKGROUND

In November 2005 the defendant stood trial on 28 counts of indecent assault against three young men. The assaults were alleged to have occurred at a time when they were below the age of 17.

- ❖ The first complainant was Mr A who was born on 26 September 1973. There were 14 specimen counts of indecent assault alleged to have taken place between 1 September 1985 when he would have been 12/13 and 1 September 1990 when he was just short of his 17th birthday.
- The second complainant was Mr B who was born on 23 October 1979. The Bill of Indictment contained 11 specimen counts of indecent assault between 1 January 1992 and 23 October 1996 – that is when he was between the age of 12 and his 17th birthday.
- The third complainant was Mr C who was born on 20 January 1976. There were 3 counts to the Bill on Indictment – specific counts – which are alleged to have occurred between 20 January 1990 and 28 January 1992 that is when he was 14 to just before his 16th birthday.

For sake of completeness the defendant's date of birth was 1 January making him two years older than Mr A: 8 years older than Mr B: and 4 ½ years older than Mr C.

It was a part of the background which required to be disclosed to the jury that the defendant went to prison on 12 February 1974 and was released on 28 July 2000. Between 1998 and July 2000 he was out of prison for 50 days of parole. Therefore some of the allegations of indecent assault made by Mr B occurred whilst the defendant was in prison.

Again for the sake of completeness one count (number 28) was withdrawn from the jury when, having given evidence, it became clear that Mr C was complaining of only 2 specific indecent assaults, not the 3 which formed the basis of the Bill of Indictment.

At the end of the trial the jury could not bring a unanimous or majority verdict in respect of any of the counts in respect of any of the complainants. The Crown having considered the matter now wish to proceed with a re-trial. However Mr C has indicated that he is not prepared to give evidence at any re-trial. The defence allege that his absence would severely prejudice the case that they wish to put to the jury, the case that indeed they put to the original jury to which I will refer below. The Crown Accept, through Mr McCollum QC, that there may be some dilution in the strength of the defendant's position by reason of the absence of Mr C, but that the extent of the dilution should not give rise to any prejudice certainly to the extent that the defendant could not receive a fair trial.

SALIENT BACKGROUND

1. The relationship between the complainants

At the trial the Crown argued that the three complainants acted independently of one another in coming forward to make their complaints. They argued there was a similarity in the conduct of the defendant to each of them to allow for corroboration by way of similar fact evidence. On the other hand the defence argued that there was a conspiracy between the three complainants who came forward at the same time, in each others company and that there was a series of inconsistencies in their individual evidence that rendered them unreliable in respect of that evidence, and as supporting or corroborating each other. The relationship between the three was therefore an important factor in both the argument of independence on the part of the Crown, and in the establishment of the conspiracy. On the evidence given by the complainants the position was:

- (a) Mr C knew Mr A most of his life.
- (b) Mr C was Mr B's best friend.
- (c) Mr A and Mr B knew each other for some two to three years before the disclosures to the police.

Before that, as Mr A stated, they didn't "run around with [each other]".

In the context of the argument of a conspiracy, and the reason why the 3 complainants might conspire, the relationship is not a classic triangular one, with each closely connected to the other's. Rather the main strength is best described as a straight line with Mr A and Mr B at either end with Mr C, the real cement, in the middle.

2. **The background to the reporting of the allegations**

As can be seen the alleged acts all occurred between 1985 and 1996. The allegations came to light in September 2003 when the complainants attended at the police station in each other's company. The evidence showed that they had been brought there by a person who was not known to them but appears to have been known to at least one of the complainant's family. This person's name was not given in court since he had republican connections. It was part of the defendant's case that these allegations were being used by a republican faction different to that to which the defendant belonged in an attempt to smear him. It was common ground that at the time of the reporting of these

offences there was a considerable amount of graffiti and threats being made against the defendant and his home, evidence confirmed by police witnesses. It was part of the defendant's case that the attendance of the 3 complainants together was evidence of a conspiracy.

In the opening of the case the Crown invited the jury to be satisfied that as between the complainants, particularly Mr B and Mr A, there was a strong similarity in the behaviour of the defendant towards each of them such as would allow the evidence of one to support the evidence of the other. I referred to this in my closing to the jury in the following terms:

"The prosecution ask you to look at what they say are the similarities in offending between the three complainants. They say they involved boys of a young age, somewhat younger than the defendant. They say there was a progression in the case of two of the boys on their evidence from touching, to exposure, to masturbation and to mutual masturbation. They point to the defendant as a person who was a friend of the boys and who, on the evidence of these two complainants, invited them to his flat. By asking you to take those similarities into account, the prosecution seek to rely on the evidence

of one complainant to support the evidence of the others”.

I then proceeded to give a direction as to the way in which such evidence should be approached and whether, and to what degree, they may wish to place on such evidence.

The allegation of “conspiracy” is the obverse of the coin of similar fact evidence. I have referred to a republican “friction” and the allegation that the three complainants got together in order first of all to feed a smear campaign. However there was a specific allegation that Mr B had been in trouble with a republican paramilitary group, was under threat from that group, and Stitt had been asked to use his good offices to deflect what might otherwise have been a serious assault on him. It is alleged that when the defendant was unable to assist Mr B that he then (a) held a grudge against Stitt: and (b) the existence of that grudge led him, supported by the other two complainants, to mount the allegations by way of smearing the defendant on behalf of the others.

The role of Mr B therefore in that defence scenario is crucial. This remains open to the defence to establish as Mr B will still be giving evidence.

3. **The evidence of the three complainants.**

I have examined carefully the evidence of each of the three complainants and the juxtaposition of each of their evidence with that of the others.

Mr B's evidence

As I indicated at the outset the allegations by Mr B are alleged to have occurred between 1992 and 1996, the date of his 17th birthday. The behaviour is alleged to have occurred at the defendant's flat but continued when he, Mr B went to visit the defendant in prison. In direct evidence he said he visited him every month or six weeks, and that the abuse in prison occurred on most visits. All of this was denied by the defendant who nevertheless agreed that there was a sexual relation, but that it occurred about 1998 when the defendant had been released on parole, and that mutual sexual contact continued for 1-2 years approximately 10-12 occasions. Mr B denied this.

When asked what effect this course of alleged abuse had had on him, Mr B stated that “his head had been done

in” and that his reason for going to the police in 2003 was because his “head was fucked up”.

As regards the involvement of paramilitaries he agreed that he had asked Mr Stitt to help him: that Mr Stitt had said he would do his best: that he had been worried for his safety, and that when Stitt had come back to tell him he could do nothing he had asked him to try and get something sorted out. However denied that he was annoyed with Mr Stitt for his failure to get help,”

The defence pointed to a number of replies given by Mr B that amounted to lying during that evidence.

1. That notwithstanding that even as late as 2003 the effect of the behaviour was causing him the problems described, Stitt had gone to a party being held by Mr B when he was out on parole. Mr B alleged that was because Stitt “had a hold on him”.
2. He admitted that even if such a hold was held over him by Stitt, in 1997 he sent him cards from holiday in Ibiza – the cards were shown to the jury.
3. He admitted that whilst in prison photographs showed him sitting on a sofa having brought his girlfriend with him to visit Stitt – again these were shown to the jury.

4. He admitted that from the limited records the defence were able to obtain from the prison service, that his allegation of visiting the defendant in prison with the regularity that he claimed, particularly immediately after the defendant went to prison simply did not bear examination, and
5. As regards the bringing of the matter to the attention of the police, he denied having spoken to Mr A before going to the police. In contrast in his evidence Mr A stated that he had spoken to Mr B in the street some days before meeting to go to the police, a visit not organised by them, and in which they were joined by Mr C – in a car driven by the third party to whom I have referred and who was from a different republican faction that Stitt.

The defence say that this is essential evidence to show that Mr B told lies at the first trial about his relationship with Mr Stitt and the effect the alleged abuse had on him. They point to the matters I have set out above in relation to his ongoing relationship in sending cards and asking him to his party to counter the allegation that his motive for going to the police was because of the adverse effect it was having on him. They point to his agreement that there was indeed a problem with a (some people belonging to or supporters of a) faction of a republican paramilitary group and that Mr Stitt had been asked for his help; and they point to the inconsistency between the evidence of Mr A and Mr

B as to the contact, or otherwise, between the two of them in those days prior to going to the police.

Mr A's evidence

He and Mr B constitute the major allegations against the defendant. Mr A is prepared to give evidence on this occasion and would be amenable to cross-examination, including putting to him the inconsistencies to which I will come.

As I have said, the allegations are that between September 1985 when Mr A was about 12 and September 1990 on the turn of his 17th birthday he was constantly abused by the defendant. He stated that while he had started out as a friend of the defendant, there came a time when he would be bought sweets and burgers by him and would have played snooker with him prior to the first indecent assault on the stairs in the defendant's house when he was about 12 or 13. From there it developed over the next years. When asked about his feelings about the abuse he said that initially he thought it was normal since he was a friend of the defendant, although he now thought it was disgusting. In cross-examination he stated that having reached the age of 16 in 1990 he avoided the defendant, although he qualified that by the words "to the best of his knowledge". However he then admitted under cross-examination:

- That in the summer of 1990 he went for 2/3 months on holiday with the defendant to the United States of America.
- He admitted that he then returned with the defendant to America a year or two later. When asked why he had said he had stopped seeing him he explained that what he had meant was "he didn't hang around with him".
- He "couldn't remember" if there had been contact in 1993 in the defendant's flat answering that "it may have happened".
- He "couldn't recall" the defendant being to his (Mr A's) house in 1993.
- He "couldn't recall" that he helped Mr A paint his mother's house after 1990.
- He "couldn't recall" cycling with him or going to Donegal with him or meeting him at the local community centre.
- He did remember playing football with him at the age of 19/20 and would have seen him in and around the area again at or about the age of 19 and 20.
- He couldn't remember but admitted that it "was a possibility" that he had bought the defendant Christmas gifts and birthday presents between the years 1991 and 1993 (again between the age of 19 and 20)
- all evidencing the defence say what was a continuous connection between himself and the defendant on a social and friendship basis for several years after his evidence (in direct examination) that he had stopped seeing him at or

around the age of 16 because of the distress that he felt at that particular time.

As regards disclosure of the alleged abuse he stated that it arose because he had seen graffiti on the walls and articles in the paper about Mr Stitt and that, contrary to what Mr B said, he had spoken to Mr B before going to the police. He said that he had not spoken to Mr C which was contradicted by Mr C. He confirmed he had gone to the police with the same people as Mr B and Mr C.

It was alleged that his motive was not a sudden conversion to disgust in the knowledge of other allegations being made, but rather to support Mr B in his complaint against Mr Stitt as part and parcel of the republican (friction). There is therefore a close correlation between the motive as it is put by the defence for Mr A's attendance at the police station in contra distinction to what he said was his motive.

All of this evidence will be given and the subject of cross-examination, save that in the absence of Mr C, the apparent contradiction as to there being a conversation between them before they went to the police will only be before the jury if they are told of the evidence of Mr C – with the difficulties with that approach in terms of the context and the disclosure of the fact there was a third complainant.

Mr C's evidence

There are only two specific Counts on the Bill of sexual abuse involving Mr C. I have set out his relationship with the other two complainants and with Stitt. He indicated that after the two incidents he felt "filthy, dirty and ashamed". He decided to tell when Mr A "came out with it", and he made disclosures when he went with the other two complainants to the police. The incidents happened in 1990/1991. When asked if he had any further contact with the defendant he said that he had never gone back near him when he was alone. However in cross examination he admitted:

- That in January 1994 he visited him in prison with a friend. He initially said that he had done that when he was skiving off school and on the spur of the moment when he had nothing else to do. However it was shown that the system of admissions to prison required advance notification and a pass. When this was put to him he agreed that was the case, and when asked how he could therefore "go on the spur of the moment" he stated that "maybe his friend had arranged it".
- That in July 1994 to July 1995 he had gone back to the prison to visit the defendant. When it was put to him that he in fact went back two or three times a year up to 1998 he replied that he "couldn't remember" – "he couldn't be 100% sure". When asked why he went, he could give no explanation.

- He admitted there was also ongoing contact with Stitt in several forums albeit he said in company.
- He admitted that he had spoken to Mr A before going to the police although he couldn't say where – in distinction to Mr A who stated he had never spoken to him.
- He stated that he was not aware of the threat that Mr B was under in 2003.

Again we are faced with the dilemma of a complainant who distances himself from the defendant from 1990/1991 only to discover that he visited him in prison on his own admission on about two occasions but could not deny that he had been there on many more than that. Clearly that could be argued as an unsustainable course of behaviour if in fact the reaction to the two acts of abuse was one of shame and disgust.

Whilst in the context of Mr A and Mr B the allegations are at a lower end of the scale both in their nature and frequency, Mr C is put forward by the Crown as supporting the evidence of Mr A and Mr B.

4. Motive

The prosecution posed the question to the jury – why would each of these three young men come forward and make independent allegations if they were not true? That will now change with the prosecution instead asking – why would these two young men come forward and make independent allegations if they were not true?

However the defence argue that was a conspiracy involving not 2 but 3 complainants. They also argue that to remove Mr C weakens considerably their ability to establish a strong link between the three complainants, leaving the jury potentially to wonder why the two men who have known each other for a relatively short time and not as life long friends would get together to conspire against the defendant. They argue that the presence of Mr C gives a more cogent basis for the conspiracy they say existed.

And there is an additional aspect to which the defence point. While the existence of Mr C and his relationship to the other two could in some form be put before the jury, the detail of his evidence could not, including what the defence say are the inconsistencies that I have set out above in my consideration of his evidence.

As I stated earlier, the relationship between the 3 men was akin to a line with Mr C in the middle, and Mr B and Mr A at either end. The role of Mr C is that of a conspirator whose links are important as is his evidence with the alleged inconsistencies affording the opportunity to challenge his motive as an active participant.

Having considered all these issues I have concluded that the absence of Mr C gives rise to considerable concern. The question is – is that concern sufficient to drive me inexorably to the conclusion that it

would be unfair to allow the defendant to stand trial without Mr C giving evidence.

The Legal Background

There are two areas of law that I have considered before reaching my conclusion as to whether or not there should be a stay put on the proceedings.

1. The first relates to the impact of the absence of Mr C may have on the presentation of evidence to the jury in a manner which satisfies me that the defendant can receive a fair trial:
2. The second addresses the question of the evidence of Mr A and Mr B as individuals in the context of any warnings that would require to be given in line with the judgment of Lord Taylor in Makanjola [1995] 1WLR 1348.

There is then the cumulative effect of the issues arising from these two legal fields.

1. In deciding whether a second re-trial should take place the authorities indicate that such a decision requires an informed and dispassionate assessment of how the interests of justice in the widest sense are best served. On the one hand a full account must be taken of the public interest in convicting the guilty, deterring serious crime and maintaining public

confidence in the efficacy of the Criminal Justice system. On the other hand full account must be taken of the defendant's interests, particularly if his evidence may be prejudiced in a significant way.

This is not a case of an application for a stay for an abuse of process where matters have not been given the opportunity of being ventilated before a jury. They were, albeit in the event the jury could not agree on either the guilt or the innocence of the defendant. To that extent the public interest has been addressed. Indeed, this aspect of the public interest in the case of Mr C has been denied by his choice not to give evidence. The fact that a trial was held and the matter placed the jury also sends a message to anyone minded to commit offences that they will be prosecuted. The first trial therefore has already had the potential to act as a deterrent. The public confidence in the efficacy of the system would not necessarily be prejudiced by a stay given the peculiar background to this particular case where one of the complainants has decided not to go forward and where the evidence of the other complainants is certainly flawed and had been undermined by their contradictions and falsehoods.

As to the position of the defence, I have already identified the difficulties that will be involved. I repeat, by putting forward the evidence of the three complainants on the basis of similar

fact the Crown has accepted a link between – in my view an inextricable intertwining of – the evidence of the three. The obverse of that coin is the conspiracy to which I have referred. That conspiracy will be more difficult to place before the jury in the absence of Mr C who plays the part of a significant lynchpin between the other two. There is also the flawed evidence of Mr C.

I have considered whether or not the court would have the ability to tackle the problems thus raised through its ordinary procedures. I have come to the conclusion that that is not possible, certainly in a way which would afford the defence a proper and fair trial.

In coming to this conclusion I accept entirely the stricture of the Court of Appeal in R. –v- DPP NI Application for Judicial Review [1999] NI 106. The jurisdiction for a stay of abuse of process is exceptional and should be exercised sparingly. I acknowledge that in the vast majority of cases the trial process is equipped to deal with the issues raised by the parties, and that a stay should never be granted where there are other ways of achieving a fair hearing. That applies not only in a first but obviously in any re-trial.

Each case must clearly be addressed on its own particular facts. The basic tenet is, as was stated by the Court of

Appeal, the ability of the court using its procedures to afford the defendant fair trial. On the basis of Mr C's absence alone and for the reasons I have stated I do not believe that that could be possible and therefore would grant such a stay.

2. The second legal aspect is the evidence of Mr An and Mr B and the question of warnings that are required to be given in sexual offences where the only evidence is that of the complainant. There is no forensic evidence in this case. There is no objective evidence which would sustain any part of the allegations made by any of the complainants. In Makanjuola at page 1351 Lord Taylor states as follows:

“(1) Section 32(1) abrogated the requirement to give a corroboration direction in respect of an alleged accomplice or complainant of a sexual offence, simply because the witness falls into one of those categories.

(2) It is a matter for the judge's discretion what, if any warning, he considers appropriate in respect of such a witness as indeed in respect of any other witness in whatever type of case. Whether he chooses to give a warning and in what terms would depend on the circumstances

of the case, the issues raised and the content in quality of the defendant's evidence.

- (3) In some cases, it may be appropriate for the judge to warn the jury to exercise caution before acting upon the unsupported evidence of a witness. This will not be simply so because the witness is a complainant in a sexual offence nor will it necessarily be so because the witness was alleged to be an accomplice. There will need to be an evidential basis for suggesting that the evidence of the witness may be unreliable. An evidential basis does not include mere suggestions by cross-examining Counsel.
- (4)
- (5)
- (6) Where some warning is required, it will be for the judge to decide the strength and warning and terms of the warning. It does not have to be invested with the whole florid regime of the old corroboration rules."

As to the circumstances in which it may be appropriate for the judge to give a warning Lord Taylor said:

"The judge will often consider that no special warning is required at all. Where however the witness has been shown to be unreliable, he or she may consider it necessary to urge caution. In a more extreme case, if the witness is shown to have lied, to have made previous false complaints, or to bear the defendant some grudge, a stronger warning may be thought appropriate and the judge may suggest it would be wise to look for some supporting material before acting on the impugned witnesses' evidence. He stressed that these observations are merely illustrated of some, not all, of the factors which the judges may take into account in measuring where a witness stands in the scale of reliability and what response they should make at that level in their directions to the jury."

In relation to these considerations I make the following points:

- (a) Having given the direction on similar fact which I have set out above I continued.

"You would first have to be satisfied beyond a reasonable doubt if there are such

similarities before considering if evidence of each injured party supports the evidence of the other. Remember that subject one area of the evidence there is no objective evidence. Such allegations are easy to make and often difficult to refute even for innocent defendants. Before considering whether to decide if each supports the other, you will consider if they are independent witnesses – that is independent from each other. Has there been the opportunity to conspire to get together to make these allegations and through that conspiracy make the case against the defendant stronger.”

- (b) An evidential basis was laid by each of the complainants themselves for suggesting that in respect of certain areas their evidence was unreliable. This related to their relationship with the defendant at some point when they say the abuse finished. I have set this out above and do not intend to rehearse it but it does play a substantial part in the issue of motive.

- (c) On the one hand the prosecution say that these three complainants came forward at the same time having been unable to speak to each other about the matter beforehand and, on the original depositions, having sought to divorce themselves and remove themselves from the company of the defendant. The defence point to ongoing relationships that were totally inconsistent with the evidence of each of the complainants as to their professed attitude towards him and that the motive was entirely different – based on the (friction at Carrick Hill).

- (d) The examples given by Lord Taylor are, as he said merely illustrative of some of the facts that the judge would take into account when measuring where a witness stands in the scale of reliability. The evidence shows that in the areas to which I have referred each of the witnesses could be considered to be fundamentally unreliable, and therefore a warning would be required to be given when addressing the Crown contention of similar fact and absence of conspiracy.

However I have considerable concerns as to the form of caution that the court could give to a jury in the absence of Mr C and his evidence.

With his absence, and the inability of the new jury to have seen him give evidence particularly through cross-examination, the court could have considerable problems in formulating a charge which would properly and fairly put the considerations necessary to allow the jury to measure the reliability of Mr A and Mr B – against a backdrop where individually their evidence was shown to be unreliable. The caution would require to address the intertwining of the separate strands of evidence of three witnesses, each with their own inherent unreliability (and their cumulative effect) in deciding what at the end of the day is the absolute essential centre of this case – are they telling the truth? In making that decision they would have to consider, at the request of the Crown – why would they make such allegations unless there was some other motive; and where the examination of the evidence of that motive suffers from the absence of the person best linking them together and whose evidence is not before them (but his allegations may be)?

Whilst it is not necessary for me to decide whether or not a stay should be imposed on this second legal basis in its own right, it informs and reinforces in my view that the defendant could not receive a fair trial in the absence of Mr C – that the issues central to the case could not be properly examined: that they could not be properly put before the jury: that the procedures of the court could not correct the deficiencies in a way which would allow the court to have necessary confidence that properly charged the jury could properly bring in a verdict of guilty: and that a jury would therefore be

considering the guilt of the defendant with a substantial and substantive issue not properly examined and not properly available to them to consider.

Needless to say the combined effect of both legal approaches reinforces my view that in the absence of Mr C could not afford the defendant a fair trial.

For all those reasons I believe it would be an abuse of process for a re-trial to be held in the absence of the voluntary non-attendance of Mr C.

After the judgment was delivered to my legal team in court they phoned me and gave me the news but then cautioned me to tell me that it would be a further two weeks before seeing a final conclusion. As under new legislation brought in through parliament the prosecution had an automatic right to appeal a judge's decision on a case. No appeal by the prosecution followed exactly two weeks later. Again it was relayed to me via Andrew. His words were "that's it, it's the end. The PPS have not tried to appeal." He then congratulated me and wished me the best of luck for the future. I know in Carrick Hill the people involved in the case have kept it very quiet, as if it was still ongoing and I was still charged. Had I been convicted of these charges I'm sure that they would have been shouting from the roof tops just like they did after I was beaten with a baseball bat on the Saintfield Road the year previous. They indeed

kept it very quiet just like when they tried to have everyone including reporters removed from the court at the trial clearly so no-one would be able to hear the lies they had told.

Chapter 16:

Way forward

The first Step of this long process was clearing my name in court. I feel totally vindicated because of all the comments the judge had made in my case. It was clear to see, in my opinion, that the judge believed that all three of the witnesses were lying. After being ignored by the media, unlike when I was first charged, my second step was to have my legal team put out a press release to the local newspapers. This was as follows:

"Paul Stitt, of Carrick Hill, North Belfast, no longer appears charged before Belfast Crown Court in relation to allegations of sexual abuse, made against him in September 2003. Proceedings were stayed by the court on application by Mr Stitt's legal representatives on the basis that he would not be able to obtain a fair trial. A jury previously was unable to reach a verdict at his initial trial. In delivering judgment, the presiding judge, made comment that in area's of the complainants' evidence, each could be considered fundamentally unreliable.

Paul Stitt protested his innocence at his trial and feels vindicated by the final outcome in the case, particularly in the view expressed in relation to each of the complainants reliability. He is no longer before the court or being investigated about any other criminal matter. He now wishes to put this difficult period behind him and continue with the rest of his life in peace."

That press release was worked out on a strictly legal basis between me and my solicitor. It only refers to the absolute facts from the end of the case and points to some other facts which are relevant to the overall issue surrounding rumours etc. I do not face any other charges. It is also clear that since I never received any sympathy from the media throughout this long battle that I felt compelled to write this book. I do so only to put down in the public domain, my own story. The people that made the complaints against me were given plenty of opportunities to tell their side of the story and indeed lots of others have been telling stories on their behalf at community meetings and in local newspapers etc.

I do not expect any "sympathy" from the local newspapers which for over the past few years have condemned me. I believe wholeheartedly that they have got this case massively wrong and they are not brave enough to admit such. Maybe someday they will surprise me and offer a simple apology. I also don't expect any sympathy from some people from my own area, who have taken the word of the complainants as gospel, to ever admit they too got it wrong. Some of those people never cared if I was innocent or guilty. For them, it was

because I was nothing other than a republican and that they were able to kick me while I was on the ground. I continue to this day to be a republican and will never stop doing so. I am still a firm supporter of Sinn Fein and the peace process. I have continued to vote in each election since I was outcast a few years ago. I still vote Sinn Fein whether they need my vote or not and indeed have managed to persuade some of my new friends to vote Sinn Fein.

Some of my friends ask me what will I do with myself now. I have told them that I'm not sure what I will do or where I will live. I was so used to working endlessly for others either politically or on community issues. I was helping to build a better community for our people to live in and for young people to grow up in. It seems as if it's been a thousand years since I was involved in all that even though it was just two and a half years ago.

However, my answer is always the same, that I don't know what I will do. I do know what I would have liked to have done if I had still been back in my own community. It would have been to run and stand as a Sinn Fein councillor in Belfast City Hall, serving the people of North Belfast and especially the people in the most disadvantaged areas. Maybe someday it will still happen as people learn the truth between what "actually" happened and what "never" happened.

I hope I have satisfied the open minded people in Belfast and beyond. I have tried to stick to the facts in this book and not fiction as others have done. Although this is my story, what people have to take into consideration, if they just don't want to take my word for it, are

these simple facts: a republican in front of a British court, a vindictive PPS trying to convict me, three civilian crown witnesses against me, two police men as crown witnesses against me, a jury that was mainly protestant, my republican background put before the jury, the media against me, a community against me and still with all this in the favour of the prosecution they could not convict me. This has to give some understanding as to the nature of the charges which I faced. More importantly the credibility of the witnesses has been totally shredded to pieces. You have been able to read the Judgment given by Judge Tom Burgess. They are not my words, or my opinion, nor are they those of my legal team. They are the words of a British Crown Court Judge and they were based solely on the facts of evidence given at my trial. We have seen so many cases of miscarriages of justice happen in the past. This judge did not want to see another one by convicting me. Even though I am sure he would strongly disagree with my republican beliefs, he never let his Britishness get in the way of justice. He absolutely acted in the interest of justice and did not fall foul to the hysteria and media onslaught which I faced from the beginning of these malicious accusations.

Republicanism is one of the most open and inclusive ideals in the western world. There are republicans who think that being: bi-sexual, gay, lesbian or even a different colour are wrong. Those people don't have the right to hold the badge of a republican and indeed they are nothing more than bigots and racists and it would serve them better to join the National Front or the Ku Klux Klan. There are also people who profess to be Christians in Carrick Hill and

indeed run to the chapel several times a week looking for forgiveness for their sins of the previous days. It's they who need to open their hearts and first understand the meaning of forgiveness. For they too are nothing more than bigots and don't hold a genuine Christian bone in their body.

If it is a crime to be bi-sexual, gay, lesbian etc, then I would have been guilty of that crime. However, bigotry and racism are crimes against humanity and they don't fit into Republican or Christian beliefs.

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